

**A**  
**A**00000881821



THE SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACULTY

L574



THE LIBRARY  
OF  
THE UNIVERSITY  
OF CALIFORNIA  
LOS ANGELES

FREDERIC THOMAS BLANCHARD  
ENDOWMENT FUND





# RELIGIO PHILOSOPHI:

Or, the PRINCIPLES of

## Morality and Christianity

ILLUSTRATED FROM

A View of the UNIVERSE, and of  
MAN's Situation on it.

---

By WILLIAM HAY, Esq;

---

Humbly inscribed to the

RIGHT HONOURABLE

ARTHUR ONSLOW,

Speaker of the House of Commons.

---

Disceteque, O miseri ! & causas cognoscite rerum,  
Quid sumus, & quidnam victuri gignimur ; ordo  
Quis datus :

\_\_\_\_\_ quem te Deus esse  
Jussit, & humanâ quâ parte locatus es in re.

PERSIUS, Sat. 3.

Attend then, wretched Youth ! in Time attend,  
To every natural Cause, and moral End.  
Look into M A N, with philosophic Eye :  
Consider W H A T we are, consider W H Y.  
Know we are posted H E R E, by Power Divine ;  
And think what Post, that Power has destin'd thine.

A Translation in 1742.

---

The SECOND EDITION.

---

L O N D O N :

Printed for R. and J. DODSLEY in Pall-mall. 1754.



BL  
51  
H32r

TO THE  
RIGHT HONOURABLE  
**ARTHUR ONSLOW,**  
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,  
AND  
ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S MOST HONOUR-  
ABLE PRIVY COUNCIL,  
THIS ESSAY IS INSCRIBED AND SUB-  
MITTED, WITH GREAT AND DUE  
ESTEEM AND VENERATION,  
BY  
HIS MOST OBLIGED,  
AND OBEDIENT SERVANT,

**W. HAY.**

2012.05

Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2007 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation



# P R E F A C E.

**T**HE following Piece has \* now been composed above fifteen Months: and consequently can have no Reference to any Writings, which made their Appearance last Year. All the Time it was in hand, the Author scrupulously avoided reading any thing new on the Points, which were the principal Subjects of his Consideration: resolving to keep

\* February 10. 1753.

his

## P R E F A C E.

his Mind as unbiassed as possible ; that any Opinions, which he should advance, might be, in the strictest Sense, his own.

His great END is, by rectifying Mens Ideas, and by removing Vulgar Prejudices, to fix RELIGION on a FIRM BASIS.

In a Matter so interesting and important, and of such general Concern to Mankind, he thought it his Duty, not to be led by AUTHORITY or CUSTOM ; but to follow NATURE and REASON ; Guides, who afford the best Lights in every Search after Truth ; and Interpreters of Scripture, who are least fallible.

Those

## P R E F A C E.

Those things, which on serious  
and mature Reflection appeared to  
him to be true, he here presents  
without Disguise to the World : and  
he hopes, that they will be read with  
the same CANDOR, with which they  
were writ.





---

---

# Religio Philosophi.

**M**A N is conscious of his own Existence: but seldom considers, WHERE, or WHAT, he is: and his Ignorance in these Particulars has ever been and will be the Source of his greatest Errors.

He is placed on the third <sup>a</sup> Planet of our Solar System: that System but one among <sup>b</sup> numberless others: that Planet <sup>c</sup> neither the greatest nor least in that System. Yet

<sup>a</sup> The six primary Planets moving round our Sun are 1. Mercury. 2. Venus. 3. The Earth. 4. Mars. 5. Jupiter. 6. Saturn.

<sup>b</sup> The Followers of COPERNICUS with the greatest Probability (almost Certainty) imagine each fixed Star to be a Sun with Planets (more or fewer) surrounding it, as our Planets surround the Sun; and all such Planets to be inhabited as well as the Earth: for the Fixed Stars are luminous and sparkling; which shews them to be of a fiery Substance like our Sun: and if they are of the same Nature, it is very probable they serve to a like Use.

<sup>c</sup> For Instance, Jupiter is much larger, and Mercury much less.

 The Author asks pardon of Persons of Education for inserting these Notes, which not one of them can want: But they were thought necessary to explain his Meaning to common Readers.

## 2 RELIGIO PHILOSOPHI.

so much does Nearness magnify Objects ; that Man who inhabits this Planet will always continue to call it the World ; to consider it as such ; and himself as the only rational and most considerable Animal, in the World ; and the Sun, Moon, and Stars (which appear so small) as made and moving only for his use.

When I say Man, I mean the Generality of Mankind : for Geography and Astronomy have taught others another Language ; who consider our Globe but as one single Link in the extensive Chain, one small Wheel in the immense Machine of the Universe : and Man its chief Inhabitant but as one Species among innumerable other Species of rational and intelligent Creatures.

This being Man's Situation ; I would ask him, who placed him on this Globe, and from whence he derives his Being ? Will he say, from his Parents ? Tho' the Manner of it he can never explain, I will admit it : and they theirs from their Parents ;

rents ; and so on : which presupposes Parents still to exist to communicate that Being, till it leads us up to some first Parents, who received theirs in another Manner. From whom did they receive it ? It could not be from themselves ; they had not Being. It could not be from the Earth : Animals do not shoot up from thence ; nor hath it a Power to produce any new Species : it must be from some other Cause : and that Cause must be some Wise and Intelligent Being, who could form an Animal of such an exquisite Frame ; and endue it with Power to propagate its Species. And as by the same reasoning we must trace every Species of Animals and Vegetables on this Globe up to some Original, which must have received its Existence in another Manner ; we must likewise conclude, that the same Wise Being, which created Man, created them also for the Ends to which they serve : and as this Globe serves for their Production, Sup-

port, and Habitation; we must likewise conclude, that He who created them, created this Globe also: and if this Globe or one Planet, then every Globe and every Planet within our System, as also the Sun the Center of it, which warms and invigorates the whole: and if our System, then every other System throughout the Universe. For it is impossible to conceive, that he who made One Wheel in the Machine, with which all the rest correspond, did not make the Whole.

By the Whole I would in this place be understood to mean every Fixed Star, which is luminous, with its surrounding Planets which are not so: which Fixed Star with its Planets taken together compose a Solar System by themselves, separate from the rest; but which perhaps correspond with the rest as a Part to the Whole. And I mean, not only every Fixed Star visible from our Earth; but if Telescopes were placed all round in  
the

the most remote of them, all new ones that might be discovered from thence ; till the Telescopes still removed on in the same manner, pointing from the same Center, should look into a Vacant Space where nothing further can be descried. This I will call our Universe ; and such Vacant Space the End of our World : not the End of Nature : since beyond that Space may be many Assemblages of Bodies equally, or perhaps more numerous, wonderful and glorious. For tho' the material Globes are limited in Number ; yet that Number may be so great as to exceed our Computation : and tho' they exist in some Part of Space, yet that Space is immense beyond our Imagination. It is indeed infinite and co-extensive with the Deity, in whom (in the most literal Sense) all things live, move, and have their Being.

But not to carry our Thoughts too far, and to lose them in Infinity, I will call the Fixed Stars visible to us, and to each other,

with their attendant Planets, the Universe. When this Universe began, or when it will end, or whether every Solar System in it began together, or will end together, God only knows : that which must have had a Beginning in Time, may as well have begun at one Time as another. It may be scarce Six Thousand Years old, or it may be Sixty Millions : it may end to-morrow, or may last for ever : for he who at his Pleasure created and preserves it ; can at his Pleasure preserve it on or annihilate it ; or without annihilating can change and vary it at his Pleasure. He has made Matter susceptible of all Forms he may be pleased to impress upon it ; and the same Mass differently disposed may exhibit great Variety of Appearances and Species of Things. The same Star or same Planet may roll on in its usual Course ; and yet the Surface of it be so altered, as to occasion a very memorable Æra in that Part. If a Fixed Star is crusted over, so as no longer

longer to dispense its Light, all its Planets in that System must share the Calamity : but that Calamity reaches not to the other Fixed Stars. So if a particular Planet has its Surface altered, it affects not the other Planets of that System, but may be of great Importance in the Planet where it happens : if all things on it are destroyed, such an Alteration with regard to those that live on it, is equivalent to a total Destruction of the Universe ; and when new Inhabitants are placed there, such Renovation is equivalent to a new Creation. That such Alterations may happen is certain, for all things are possible with GOD : that they should happen is agreeable to his Wisdom and Providence : that they have happened is almost certain from Phænomena visible to us within our small Sphere of Observation. <sup>a</sup> Have not new Stars appeared and old ones disappeared ? <sup>c</sup> Does

<sup>a</sup> Vid. LOWTHORP's Abridgment of the Philosophical Transactions, Vol. i. p. 247.

<sup>c</sup> Ibid. p. 274. to 279.

not the Face of our own Sun vary ? ' Does not the Surface of one Planet appear regular ? that of another broken and irregular, like the Fragment of something once more entire ? But more of this in another Place.

Having thus far considered WHERE I am ; let me now consider WHAT I am.

I am an Animal ; and of that Species, which is superior to all others on this Globe. Every Animal on this Globe, must have some Essence or Principle, distinct from the Body, residing in it ; because they are sensible of Impressions made on the Body, and are capable of making Impressions on the Body, and of moving it : which the Body alone cannot do ; for the Body is Matter, and Matter however varied in Form is incapable of Sense and Self-motion : and a Clod of Earth, a Stone, a Chair, or a Table, might feel and move,

<sup>1</sup> Ibid. 382. Phasis of Jupiter. 423 of Mars. 425. of Venus Those of the Earth and Moon are visible without a Telescope : and we have Maps of both.

as well as a Horse, a Dog, or a Man, if these last had not some Essence or Principle united or associated to their outward Frame distinct from it.

This Essence or Principle I call Spirit, to distinguish it from Matter; and the particular Spirit associated to the Body of any Animal, the Soul of that Animal. How the Soul acts on the Body of an Animal, I know not; that it does, I know from the Effect. But all Motions in the Body do not proceed from the Soul, which is only the Cause of Voluntary Motion. The Circulation of the Blood and Juices of the Body is owing to the same Natural Causes, as the Circulation of the Sap in Vegetables is owing; and as a Plant may be improved or impaired by a proper or improper Manure, Air, Exposure, or Culture; so may the Body of an Animal. While the Body is kept in Order, the Soul is easy; when it is not, the Soul is in Pain: when the Functions of the Body cease,  
the

the Soul quits the Association ; but exists in a separate State, unless GOD pleases to annihilate it. For as every Particle of the Body (however transformed) will remain after the Separation ; so will the Soul also : for whatever hath once received a Being from GOD, cannot cease to be without his Interposition.

The Dignity of every Animal on this Globe rises according to the Number and Extent of the Faculties of the Soul. It would be difficult to marshal them all by this Rule. But this Rule gives Man the Precedence, and the Dominion and Government of the rest. What becomes of the Souls of Brute Animals after a Separation from their Bodies, imports not Man to know : but it is of the greatest Consequence to him to consider the Nature of his own Soul ; and what Hopes he can form from thence of its future State ; without which the little Time he  
passes

passes on this Globe is of very little Consequence.

It is useless to enquire whether the Soul of Man is first associated to the Body in the Womb; or whether it resides principally or altogether in the Brain. Whatever the Case be, in those Instances it resembles the Soul of Brutes; as it does in some others. It has the same Affection for the Body, the same Desire to preserve it, the same Inclination to propagate its own Species, and to mix in Society with them, and is affected with the same Passions of Joy, Grief, Anger, and the like.

But then there is this great Difference. It has more Reason, to curb and controul those Appetites and Passions: before an Action, to foresee the Consequence; and after it, to reflect on it with Pleasure or Remorse: to compare past Things with present, and present with future: little of which is to be observed in Brutes, whose Ideas seem confined to the present Time and

and Occasion, and their Capacities not to admit of much Improvement.

But the Soul of Man is capable of perpetual Improvement. The little Knowledge he gains by Reading, Conversation, or Contemplation, still excites his Thirst after more: and though he can make but small Progress in his present State, his Ambition is boundless: he can know but little, and yet he wants to know all. He is confined to a Point of Time in this Life; yet extends his Views backwards and forwards through Millions of Ages, till he is lost in Eternity. He is confined to some minute Part of this Globe; yet while his Feet stand on it, his Soul is travelling to every Globe, traversing immense Spaces from World to World, till he at last is lost in Infinity. He wants to be acquainted with Nature and with GOD, and dreads the Thoughts of Annihilation. And can it be imagined that GOD will annihilate a Being in its

own

own Nature immortal, and which he hath indued with such a Passion for Immortality? or that he would amuse and delude Man in vain with a sublime Capacity and a laudable Ambition to contemplate him and his Works, and never give him the Opportunity of being gratified? Most unworthy Notions of the Deity! from whose Goodness alone, without other Argument, I have reason to be convinced that my Soul is immortal.

Since then GOD hath given to Man an immortal Soul, with Faculties superior to those of other Animals on this Globe; Man ought in Gratitude to return a constant Tribute of Praise and Thanksgiving to GOD who gave them.

When I raise my Thoughts from our own Globe, and contemplate the general Frame of the Material World, and the Analogy of its Parts, I am firmly convinced that there are, not only in the Planets of our own Solar System,  
but

but in each of the numberless Planets throughout the Universe, many Species of living Creatures, with Bodies formed and supported from the Materials of their respective Globes, which after propagating their Kind return again to the common Mass: resembling terrestrial Animals in these Particulars; though from Difference of Situation they must be very unlike them in bodily Frame and Constitution. I am persuaded too, that there is on every Globe, as well as ours, some one Species superior to and ruling over the rest, with a Mind capable of searching out GOD in his Works, and adoring his Providence and Goodness.

Hence I conclude; that Praise and Thanksgiving are continually ascending to his Throne, not only from this Spot of ours, but at the same Instant from every Quarter of the Universe: every Globe joining with the others, Man with many Creatures to him unknown, and they with him,

him, in One Chorus, in One Anthem, to One great Author of their Being. It is a general Religion, a joint Communion, a Universal Church ; which, tho' differing throughout in Forms and Ceremonies, yet is a Stranger to Sects and Divisions ; entirely united in Spirit, and directing their Halelu-jahs to one Object in Gratitude for their Being and Preservation. There is nothing can extend our Charity more than this Thought ; which lifts it from the Earth to the Skies ; and bids us look not only on all Men as our Neighbours ; but on all Mortal Intelligent Beings throughout the immense Space of the Universe : and bids us love them, not as our own Species, but as our Fellow-creatures, and as Members of the same Church and Communion, united to us in the same Spirit and Bond of Devotion.

And as GOD has united all Intelligent Creatures by the same Principles of Religion ; so has he in the same Principles of Morality. It is a Universal Principle of Morality,

Morality, to love one another; and therefore to hurt or destroy their own Species is an enormous Crime in every Globe of the Universe. Another Universal Principle of Morality is, to use the Objects around them (which the Scripture calls GOD's Creatures; and which in common Speech one may call the Furniture of their Globe or Habitation) to the Ends for which they were designed; and therefore the Abuse of them is every where an immoral Action. For the Nature of Good and Evil consists entirely in preserving or confounding that Order of Things which GOD hath established, and which none but GOD himself can supersede.

Though GOD hath established a good Order which ought to be preserved by his Creatures, yet it is certain, that for some great and hidden Ends of his Providence, he hath bestowed on Material Intellectual Beings a Liberty of Action, which they may employ to confound that Order. Man does

many

many immoral Actions daily on this Globe : and it is most probable, that the Animals residing in many other Globes do the same. Since therefore God hath made them liable to Sin, we must conclude that out of his Goodness he uses many Methods to recal them to a Sense of their Duty ; by Signs, and by Wonders ; by Instruction, and by Correction. Which may be called his Moral Dispensations, and which may be as various as the Globes themselves ; and which are carried on in each according to his good Pleasure. In some, the whole Colony may be destroyed, and another created. In others, the Face of the Globe may be altered to punish the Inhabitants : for the Lord maketh a fruitful Land barren for the Sins of them that dwell therein. And as the Moral Transactions in one Globe are distinct from those of another ; so neither will any Natural Alteration on the Surface of one at all af-

fect the rest : for however Forms are there altered, the Quantity of Matter continues the same, and the Globe will roll on in its old Course. And we in fact observe a Difference in the Surface of the Planets of our own System. The Surface of the Moon seems broken and irregular like that of her Principal the Earth, as if she had sympathized with her Fate : whilst the Belts of Jupiter shew the Land and Sea to be regularly disposed, as if he still continued in his original State ; or after some Changes were restored to it again : For as Houses are destroyed and rebuilt ; or the Apartments or Furniture altered ; so may it be with these Globes : and that after some Generations, the Species of Men or other Creatures may become extinct as well as private Families : and when one Colony is destroyed, another may be planted in their stead.

And let not such Changes be thought unnatural, or to derogate from the Perfection

fection of GOD's Works. I will suppose (which perhaps may not be the Case) that he created all the Globes of the Universe together; and that they are so many Wheels in that vast Machine, which have a mutual Connection and Dependance, and will roll on together till the whole is destroyed, if ever it be his Pleasure to destroy it. But I see no reason, why the several Species of Material Beings on each Globe, the Individuals of which are continually arising from it, and returning to it again, may not have their Periods as well as the Individuals themselves: or why they may not be again renewed; or others be substituted in their place: or why the whole Surface of a Globe may not undergo a Change. Can the Potter mould the same Mass into Variety of Utensils? Can the Painter strike the Figures off his Canvas, and place on it others of the same or of a different Colour and Shape? And cannot

God at his pleasure effect the like Changes to answer the wise Ends of his Providence? Which Changes are far from confounding or deforming the general System of the Universe.

There is a particular Dispensation of Providence to each Globe: to carry on the Ends of which all Alterations on it are regulated: and these Alterations cannot in the Course of Nature in the least affect other Globes. They are as much unknown there as the Transactions of the Inhabitants. Some few great ones only may perhaps be observed through a Glass darkly from some neighbouring Planet, though the Cause remain a Secret. For instance; when our own Globe was overflowed immediately before the Creation of ADAM, and again in the Days of NOAH, Astronomers in Mars, Venus, or the Moon might observe it darker, than either before or after those Periods; and perhaps they will hereafter observe it of a more ruddy

Com-

Complection at the time of the general Conflagration ; and when a New Earth, like a Phenix, shall rise out of its Ashes, will see it resume its former Hue : though the Spots of Land and Water, they were before acquainted with, may by such Alterations have changed their Situation.

Mens Observations are very limited, both in Time and Space : to their own Age and the History of a few Centuries before them : to their own Globe, and that too in great part unknown : and because they have never seen or read of such great Alterations, they are apt to conclude, that they never did, can, or will happen : But a thing is no less possible, because rare : and a thing we account rare may be very common in the general Course of Nature : it is a rare thing for a Person to be born or to die in a private Family ; perhaps it does not happen once in a Year : in a great City it happens every Day ; in a great Kingdom every Hour,

and in some Part of the Earth certainly every Moment. So a general Deluge or Conflagration, which may not happen in thousands of Years on our Globe, may be Events that happen every Moment in some or other of the innumerable Globes dispersed through the Universe.

Again : Men observing the Beauty, Harmony, and Relation of Creatures on Earth ; and the regular and uniform Production of each Species of them, are too apt from thence to conclude, that every thing must for ever continue in the same Course, and can be in no other ; and that the Order of the World in the State they find it is the only perfect Image of the Idea of GOD. But can it be denied, that he who created for his Pleasure, may for his Pleasure alter or destroy ? And if he should do so ; that he may rebuild in the same or any other Manner ? For though it would be Blasphemy to say, that the Works of GOD are not good, and wisely conducted

in

in every State; it would equally be so to advance, that he is under a necessity to continue them in the same State, and could not vary it; as if his Power were exhausted; or that if he did vary it, that it would be for the worse; as if the Riches of his Wisdom were at an End.

Besides: we see but a very small Part of the Scheme of Providence: and those Events, which appear to us so destructive on particular Globes, may contribute to the Harmony of the Whole. These Storms may be as necessary as the Calm; and seen from a right Point of View may afford as beautiful a Prospect: the most uniform is not the most pleasing; it is that which is changing, and which affords the greatest Variety of Objects. And whether these Changes are effected by what we call Natural or by what we call Miraculous Means, they are equally the Work of GOD, and serve equally to proclaim his Power.

If such Changes are possible (as no doubt they are) there are both Moral and Natural Reasons to convince us, that they are every Moment going on in some or other of the innumerable Globes dispersed through the Universe.

1. If God has placed on each Globe (as is more than probable) Material Beings endued with Intelligence and Free Will ; these Changes serve, either to proclaim his Power and awaken them to a Sense of their Duty, or to execute his Justice by punishing their Crimes.

2. We may be convinced of such Alterations from the Appearance of our own Globe : which (besides what we know from History) are recorded in very visible Characters on its Surface. Look on a Map of the Globe ; how irregular is the Disposition of Land and Water ! Look on many Parts of the Globe itself ; how rugged are they with barren, broken, and mis-shapen Rocks, and horrid Precipices !

pices ! which are next to Proofs, that the present Surface is but the Fragment of something once more entire. And the many Marine Fossils both Natural and Artificial found in Inland Places, are almost a Demonstration they were once covered with Sea.

Nor is there occasion for a Miracle to effect Alterations of this kind : the Natural Instruments are always near at hand, and under the Direction of the Almighty : and a general Shock may by their means happen, as well as those Particular Ones, which frequently (I had almost said daily) happen in some Part or other of the Surface of our Globe.  
<sup>g</sup> Have we not certain and recent Accounts of Cities swallowed up ? <sup>h</sup> of Mountains

re-

<sup>g</sup> LOWTHORP's Abridgment, Vol. 2. from p. 400 to 423. with Accounts of Earthquakes in 1692, in which all Sicily and Jamaica were shook, and Catanea, Port-Royal, &c. destroyed : of another at Lima in 1687, and another at Batavia in 1699.

<sup>h</sup> Between the 19th and 20th of September 1539, Monte Novo near Naples was thrown up by an Eruption

removed? of others sinking and leaving  
Lakes

tion of Fire: Its perpendicular Height amounting to 400 Fathom, and its Circuit to above 3000 Paces. (See ADDISON's and MISSON's Travels.)—On Saturday the 17th of February 1571, at six in the Evening, a Piece of Land of 20 or 30 Acres on a sudden broke loose from the neighbouring Fields, and moved slowly on till Monday at Noon, for about 400 Paces, and then formed Markley Hill in Herefordshire (see Cambden's Britannia and Annals of Q. Eliz)—The Alterations on Mount Vesuvius, are well known: They are now searching the Ruins of Heraclea, which was swallowed up in its first Eruption in the Reign of TITUS VESPASIAN. The Elder PLINY lost his Life by venturing too near to observe it. His Fate is described by his Nephew in one of his Epistles to TACITUS, (L. 6. Ep. 16.) and the Catastrophe of the Mountain itself is beautifully lamented by MARTIAL (L. 4. Epig. 24.) for what was before clothed with Vines was then buried in Ashes.—The Fate of the Isle of Ischia is the Reverse. Mr. ADDISON says, the ancient Poets call it Inarime, and lay Typhæus under it by reason of its Eruptions of Fire. There has been no Eruption for near 300 Years: the last was very terrible, and destroyed a whole City. At present there are scarce any Marks left of a subterraneous Fire: for the Earth is cold, and over-run with Gras and Shrubs where the Rocks will suffer it.—The Via Appia and Via Flaminia (formerly the direct Roads to Rome) are now in several Places lost in steep Ascents and deep Fens and Valleys, that are inaccessible. MISSON on this occasion (Let. 21. V. 1.) makes a general Reflection on the Alterations Time makes on the Surface of the Earth. He says, "Tis very certain, that by Winds, Rains, great Floods, Earthquakes, and other Accidents, Plains are swelled to Hills, and Hills sunk to Valleys. The Land gains from the Sea in some places, and loses in others. The Sea furnishes the Land with Lakes, and the Land

Lakes in their room ? and <sup>1</sup> of new Islands raised in the Sea ? and chiefly by Force of subterraneous Fires ? And can those Fires want a Supply, when there is an Ether (which is the Natural Fire, and which, when by certain Agitations it is visible to us, we call Fire) is perpetually pervading every Globe in the Universe ? How readily it will kindle certain Substances in the Air is evident from the Meteors seen there ; as well as from (what we call) Electrical Experiments. How quick and instantaneous its Motion, how violent and irresistible its Force, appears from the Natural Lightning as well as from that Artificial Lightning which is raised and conducted by those Experiments. That there is a con-

Land renders it Islands. Rivers dry, and change their Course. Mountains become level, and the Figure of the Globe is in perpetual Variation.

<sup>1</sup> LOWTHORP continued by EAMES and MARTIN, V. 6. p. 203. An Island raised by subterraneous Fire near Tercera in 1720.

tinual Flux of Ether through our Globe appears more than probable by the Pointing of the Needle ; and <sup>k</sup> by the Variation of the Needle it appears too, that that Flux of Ether is continually varying : and what a Change in our Globe such a Variation may in the End produce, the Author of Nature only knows. The Ether agitated by the Sun and other great Luminaries (as by a glass Globe in Electrical Experiments) with its genial Warmth and Light cherishes and invigorates every Planet in the Universe : but if it should be quickened in its Motion, or differently directed by him, who regulates its every Atom, it may prove fatal where it was before beneficial : it may blast and destroy all Species of Creatures on our Globe ; and Vulcanos may break out in  
every

<sup>k</sup> LOWTHORP, V. 2. p. 610. In the Year 1580. the Needle pointed at London  $11^{\circ} 15'$  to the East of the North Po'e : in 1680  $4^{\circ}$  to the West of it : and now about  $17^{\circ}$ .

every Quarter, as dreadful as Ætna or Vesuvius, and end in a general Conflagration.

If an Opinion of such Changes is agreeable to Reason and Nature (as I am most firmly convinced that it is) it is also confirmed by the Voice of Scripture, as I will shew more fully in its place. And Men cannot too often dwell on this Subject ; because the more they think of it, the juster Notions they will have of GOD and Religion.

i. This Opinion banishes that absurd one of Necessity and Fate, to which some would subject the Power of the Almighty : conceiving Those Words to signify something Real ; whereas they are Mere Words without Signification : not applicable to any thing existing in Nature, but to what exists only in Poetical Fiction. Or if they mean any thing, they mean only this ; that all things must always have been, and must always be,

be, as they are at present ; for no better Reason but because they are so at present : which is blasphemously setting Bounds to the Power and Wisdom of GOD ; and allowing him less Liberty of Counsel and Action than Man, who can plan out and execute his Work in different Ways, and alter it at his Pleasure.

2. It banishes another unworthy Notion of GOD ; that he is only the Soul of the Material World, which is his Body ; and that he can no more change the Form of it, than we can that of our Body ; or divert the ordinary Course of its Parts, than we can the Course of the Blood in our Veins. What is this but to suppose that Matter is Eternal and Infinite, or that GOD himself is not so. It is hard to believe that Matter is Eternal, because it exists only in particular Parts of Space : and that very Fact proves it is not Infinite ; nor would GOD be so, if he existed only where there is Matter. But the

the truth is ; Matter is comprehended in some Part of Space only : but Space is infinite as GOD : in whom all things live, and move, and have their Being. And the absurd Notion of GOD's being only the Soul of the World would leave him less Power over it, than Man has over his own Body ; which he has the natural Power to destroy, and separate from the Soul ; which may exist after such Separation. And shall we suppose that GOD wants Power to destroy the Material World ; or that he would the less exist if there was not an Atom of it left ?

3. This Opinion banishes that of the Epicureans, which denies a Providence, or that GOD intermeddles in the Affairs of the World. An Opinion equally Impious and Unphilosophical. Impious, as it supposes GOD either not to be the Author of Nature ; or that like an unkind Parent he abandons his Offspring. Unphi-

philosophical, as it supposes Motion without a Cause.—<sup>1</sup> It likewise banishes an Opinion of DESCARTES : that at the Creation GOD impressed on Matter a Certain Quantity of Motion, which unrenewed has continued ever since, and will ever continue without Increase or Diminution ; and being diverted into different Channels serves all the Purposes of the Universe. If this ascribes the Beginning of Motion to GOD, yet it gives no good Reason for the Continuance of it : For as Matter is inanimate, and cannot move itself, its natural State is Rest. And as there must be some living Power to begin its Motion, that Power must still continue acting to continue it ; and if it ceased acting one Moment, the Motion itself would cease : Whence I conclude, that the Deity has every Moment from the Creation of the Universe been acting with

<sup>1</sup> RENATI DESCARTES Principiorum Philosophiae Pars Secunda, c. 36.

equal Vigour in its Preservation ; and if he ceased so to do, the World itself would cease. For a perpetual Motion must proceed from a perpetual Cause.

4. This Opinion is of use, not only to extirpate false and unworthy Notions of the Deity ; but also to improve our Ideas of his Power, Wisdom and Justice. How glorious does he appear ! when we consider him, not only rolling on every Globe in its Course, but at the same time regulating all that passes in any of them ! and though they are innumerable, and each stocked with innumerable Variety of Creatures ; yet that he is intimately present in all, and directs the most minute Transactions ! that the Hairs in each are numbered, and that not a Sparrow falls to the Ground in any of them without his Knowledge and Appointment ! What an inconceivable Variety of new Scenes equally beautiful and harmonious, must be continually arising

D in

in his Presence, when at his Pleasure he changes the Face of these Globes, and causes them, like the Adder, to put off their old Dress, and appear in fresh Vigour and Beauty ! How awful and how amiable does he appear, when we consider him, making these Changes in Nature subservient to moral Purposes, and employing them as the Instruments of temporal Rewards and Punishments to those Classes of Rational Beings, that inhabit each Globe ! At the same Instant that he acts in some as a tremendous Judge, he acts in others as an indulgent Parent. In some only alarming, in others correcting ; in some destroying, in others rebuilding ; in some changing only Individuals, in others entire Species ; and exalting the Rational Creatures of each Globe from a Material to a Spiritual, from a Mortal to an Immortal State ; transforming them into Angels ;

Angels ; and from those Seminaries perpetually increasing the Host of Heaven.

5. This Opinion not only promotes Natural Religion ; but also confirms the Authority of Scripture, in which the same things are revealed. Are not we there told of a new Heaven and a new Earth ? That the Heavens shall wax old as doth a Garment, and as a Vesture shall they be changed ; though the LORD is the same, and his Years shall not fail ? Have we not there the History of some Changes on our own Globe by the Creation and the Deluge ? And have we not the Prediction of a future Change by a general Conflagration ? In which Points Reason and Scripture mutually confirm each other.

Such Meditations are worthy of Rational Creatures ; who are led by them from their respective Planets to visit those Parts of Nature which lie beyond their View. Though the visible Parts of it sufficient-

36            RELIGIO PHILOSOPHI.

ly declare GOD's Glory, and are that Page of the huge Volume which he has laid open for their constant Perusal and Reflection: and their own Planet is the particular Passage in that Page, which merits their more immediate Attention. They may range in Speculation to every Globe in the Universe; but their own Globe is the only Scene of their Actions; and by what they do there they are to approve themselves to their Creator; who has left them free to act, but given them Rules to act by, which he has made known to them by Reason. These Rules are either General, and concern all the Universe; or Local, which concern only particular Planets. To love GOD and adore him, to love their own Species and assist them, to use other Creatures to the Ends for which they were given, and not abuse them, are of the first Sort of Rules, which GOD has prescribed to all Rational Material Beings through-

throughout the Universe ; and are eternal Foundations of Religion and Morality. But the particular Form and Manner in which these Actions are to be performed in each Globe, must be as various as the Nature and Situation of the Globes themselves, as the Rational Creatures that inhabit them, and the Objects with which such Creatures are surrounded. These external Modes of Religion and Morality which are practised in any particular Globe cannot be known in the rest, but are the peculiar Concern of that Globe only. And the only Way to judge of their Propriety is, to consider, if they are agreeable to Reason, if they are adapted to the Nature of Things on that Globe, and if they tend to promote the great Ends abovementioned. If they do not, they can neither be pleasing to GOD, nor derive their Original from him.

Let us now consider the Laws of Religion and Morality, which concern the

Present State of our own Planet, and the Present Race of Mankind.—I say the Present Race! For they no more concern any Colony of Creatures, that may have dwelt on this Globe before us, or any other, that may succeed us, than they concern the Inhabitants of Jupiter; or any other Planet whatsoever.

It hath pleased GOD to place Man on this Globe, to contemplate his Works, and by such Contemplations to ascend to him as the first Cause. Amongst all GOD's Works it is most incumbent on him to scrutinize himself, and the Globe which he inhabits, to learn what he is himself, and in what Part of the Creation he is stationed; and from a Knowledge of his own Nature and Situation to arrive at the Knowledge of his Duty, both as a Citizen of the Universe in general, and as an Inhabitant of this Globe in particular.

As a Citizen of the Universe, he has a Duty in common with all Rational Beings howsoever dispersed throughout the Whole, arising from their Relation to God ; by which all are bound in their several Spheres to return their Tribute of Thanks and Adoration to the Author of their Being. This is Man's Religious Duty.

As an Inhabitant of this Globe, he has a Duty peculiar to himself (as all other Rational Beings within their respective Globes have) arising from his Relation to the other Creatures on the Face of it : the right Treatment of which is his Moral Duty. And this he may learn from a due Consideration, of the Nature which God hath bestowed on them, of the Order in which he hath placed them, and of the Ends for which he intended them : and if he confound neither their Nature, their Order, or their Use, his Actions are Good ; if he does, they are Criminal,

nal. Because GOD hath given him an Understanding to comprehend the Nature of Things, a Freedom of Will to chuse what he will do, and a Freedom of Action to do what he chuses. And the better to guard his Actions, GOD has given him Reason (or a Power of exercising his Understanding) to examine and compare Things, the better to judge of their Qualities and Relations, and of the Consequences of his own Actions with regard to them, and to himself. And if a Man employs his Reason before he acts, he will seldom err in his Moral Duty ; for the Nature of Things, the most common and necessary to be known, is generally very obvious and plain. But if he acts before he employs his Reason ; if the Action is right, he will have no Merit ; if it is wrong, he will judge of it when it is too late, and his Conscience will condemn him : for Reason, which should always be our Guide before we act,

act, will always in spite of us be our Judge after the Action, either to censure or applaud.

Why then is Mankind so little guided by Reason; that the Generality do not think before they act; and of those that do, many act against their Judgment; that even the very Best do many Things amiss; and that there is not One without Faults? The Reason is, that it hath pleased GOD (for Wise Purposes to us at present unknown) to implant in Man Affections and Appetites, which, as they stir him up to Action, often conduct him to wrong Objects, or withdraw him from those which are right; the first of which he pursues for the obtaining of some present Advantage either of Pleasure or Profit; and avoids the last for the escaping some present Inconvenience either of Uneasiness or Loss; and both with such Eagerness, that often he does not consult his Reason before he acts; and when

when he does, he often judges wrong by not estimating Things according to their real Value: all which makes him commit Actions, which on more mature Consideration he would avoid.

Such being Man's Frame and Constitution, it is no Wonder that he is liable to Error. And for the Truth both of the Cause and of the Effect we may appeal, in the first place to what passes within every Man's Conscience; in the next to what passes in the World within our own Knowledge and Experience; and lastly to the History of all past Ages, which is chiefly filled with the Vices and Follies of Mankind. When we hear of Men, instead of worshipping the God of Heaven and Earth, worshipping Heaven and Earth as Gods; instead of bending the Knee to the God who made them, falling down to Gods that they made; instead of loving and assisting their own Species, injuring and destroying them;

them; instead of using other Creatures for the Purposes intended, abusing them to gratify their own Passions and Appetites; we are tempted almost to doubt if Man himself is a reasonable Creature.

Since then GOD has given to Man a weak Understanding and strong Passions, which he is naturally inclined to follow, if left to himself; can we suppose GOD would leave him to himself to sink into so miserable a State, and suffer the higher Faculties of his Soul, which are so capable of Improvement, to languish and be useless? Is it not more rational to believe, that he would furnish him with some Means, to enlighten his Understanding, fortify his Reason, incline his Will, and moderate his Passions, that he may live in greater Happiness and Dignity as well on this Globe, as in any future State for which he may be designed? And what Means more easy and natural can we imagine, than that GOD, who forms

forms the Soul, and turns it as it pleaseth his Wisdom, should inspire some particular Persons with superior Talents to be Guides to the rest of Mankind ; who by laying many Things open to their View may enlighten their Understanding ; by proposing Rational Rules of acting, may instruct the Ignorant ; and by shewing the Reasons and Motives of so acting, may raise the Attention and work on the Inclination of Men to pursue them ?

But how is Mankind to know these Guides, who for these great Ends may be so qualified and commissioned by GOD ? I think there can be no better Way to distinguish them than by their Characters, their Doctrine, and by the Circumstances attending the Promulgation of it.

1. They must be Wise and Just Men ; who have only the Glory of GOD and Welfare of Mankind in View ; without any Prospect of worldly Power, Pleasure or Profit to themselves.

2. Their

2. Their Doctrine ought to be agreeable to Reason, since that is the only Standard given by GOD to Man to judge of it by. It ought to be general, and extend to all the Race of Mankind, who at present inhabit this Globe. It ought to acquaint them with the Being and Attributes of GOD: and that he is the Author and Preserver of all Things. It ought also to acquaint Man with his own Nature, his Original, and his End; and what Relation he bears to GOD, to his own Species, and to other Creatures, and to point out to him some Rational Method of performing his Duty to each. 3. The Manner of promulgating their Doctrine should be such, as to make it taken notice of at First; and to continue the Memory of it on this Globe, as long as the Race of ADAM continue on it.

Let us in the next place consider, what Doctrines now in the World answer these

## 46. RELIGIO PHILOSOPHI.

these Characteristicks : and which of those that claim the Direction of Mankind ought to be preferred.

I throw out of the Case the Heathen Poets and Philosophers : The First involved their Sentiments in Fable and Fiction, which the Generality of Mankind adopted into a System of Idolatry. And though the Last did not believe those Absurdities with the Vulgar ; and have left behind them many admirable Precepts of Morality ; yet they had very imperfect Notions of the Deity ; very absurd ones of the Origin of Man ; and very doubtful ones of any future State : and though they write on those Topicks, they do it to propose rather than to establish their Opinions ; for none of them set up for Universal Guides.

If we take a View of the Religions now prevailing in the World ; we shall find the greatest Part of the Globe still clouded with Idolatry : which from the

earliest Ages down to the present remains a Monument of the Ignorance, Weakness, and Superstition of Man.

The three Religions, that profess the Knowledge of one only true GOD, are the Jewish, the Christian, and the Mahometan. I will speak of the last first : because barely to mention the Character of the Author, with some few of its Tenets, will shew it not to have the Characteristicks of a true Religion. The Author was an Impostor, who used many Frauds to deceive his Followers ; and by those Means advanced himself to worldly Power and Grandeur. The Method he proposes to propagate his Religion is by the Sword, not by Persuasion ; by Conquest, not by Conviction. The Rewards he promises in a future State are sensual ; such as Rational Men would contemn in this Life ; and which the Soul divested from the Body cannot enjoy in another. Add to this ;

this ; that the Pilgrimage to Mecca renders it a Local Religion, and impossible to become Universal : for if that, which is enjoined to All, can be performed only by a Few, it is a vain Command, and lays no Obligation on any.

The Jewish Religion is the Stock on which Christianity is grafted, after lopping off the superfluous Branches : therefore it is of equal Importance to a Christian as a Jew ; that it should be of divine Original. It is contained in the Writings of MOSES, the Oldest now extant ; and which must therefore stand on their own Authority and Credibility. We must therefore (as I said before) consider their Author, the Writings themselves, and their Promulgation.

MOSES was educated in the Court of PHARAOH ; and was instructed in the Wisdom of the Egyptians, a learned and powerful Nation in that early Age ; and from whence Learning spread itself into other

other Countries. But he chose rather to suffer Affliction with the People of GOD, than to pass for the Son of PHARAON's Daughter. And was miraculously called by GOD to deliver his Countrymen from Slavery, and to conduct them to the Promised Land through the Wilderness; where for Forty Years he approved himself a most wise Legislator; a most upright Judge; and a most shining Example of Piety and Virtue.

His Writings are Philosophical, Historical, Prophetical, Moral, Political, and Religious. And let us appeal to Reason, if they carry not with them the Internal Marks of a Divine Original.

In the Philosophical Part he describes the Creation of the Universe; the Formation of the Surface of our Globe; and the Original of Man and all other Creatures on it.

He sets out with saying, " In the Beginning GOD created the Heavens and

"the Earth." A very short but sublime Sentence ! of few Words ; but which express and imply as much good Sense and sound Philosophy, as could be contained in as many Volumes. It asserts, what none but the Fool ever denied in his Heart, that there is a GOD : without Beginning ; self-existent from Eternity. That all other Beings had a Beginning ; and derived their Existence from him. That he created them, or caused them to exist out of Nothing ; not out of a pre-existing Chaos, which is a very Chimerical Notion. Whether we suppose it Eternal, or to have been created before the World. For if we suppose such a Chaos Eternal ; it is as absurd and a more gloomy Idea than that of an Eternal World. And can we suppose such a useless piece of Lumber to lye by from Eternity, till it pleased GOD to employ it in the Creation ? Or can we suppose, that GOD, like a common Mechanick,

nick, wants Materials provided beforehand to begin his Work ? And it is as unworthy of the Deity to suppose, that GOD first created a Chaos, and out of that a World. For can we conceive, that in the Original Production of the World he would frame it imperfect, in order to render it more perfect afterwards ? and perform that at Two Operations; which he could perform at One ? How much more agreeable to the Divine Majesty and Perfection is the Sense of the Words, " GOD created the Heavens and " the Earth !" Plainly implying, not only our Globe, but every Globe in the Universe ; and that all Nature, with every Being comprehended in it, started at once at the Word or Nod of the Almighty into a beautiful Order and Harmony, to declare his Glory, and demonstrate his Power and Wisdom.

After this general and noble Description of the Creation of the Universe, he

confines his Discourse to this little Globe, the peculiar Province of Man. And what he says of it seems to me, not to relate to the Original Formation of it ; but to some great Alteration of its Surface, immediately preceding the Donation of it to the present Race of Mankind. It may have undergone many Revolutions and Vicissitudes before that time : for GOD out of the same Mass of Matter, can produce Variety of Effects, equally wonderful and glorious. But what it hath been before its present State, or what it may be after it, GOD, who alone is able to vary the Landscape, alone knows ; and it is vain for Man to conjecture. It is of more importance for him to know, how this Habitation was prepared for him ; how he was placed in it ; and by what Tenure he holds it : which Particulars are distinctly related by Moses.

Whoever maturely and impartially considers the Force of his Expressions relating to our Globe, I should imagine would concur with me in Opinion, that they cannot relate to the Original Creation of it. He says, " that the Earth was " without Form." He cannot mean, that it was not a Globe; or that it was not a Planet in that Part of our Solar System in which it is ranged at present. Nor can he mean (for the Reasons I have before given) that this or any other Globe, at the Creation of the Universe, came rude and imperfect from the Hands of the Creator. He must mean that the Form of its Surface was altered; that it was without the Form it had, either at the Creation, or at the time immediately preceding that State of it which he is describing; that the Beauty and Harmony of its Parts were destroyed, and its former Figures melted and dissolved, like Wax; in order to receive a new Stamp and

Impression from the Almighty. And his next Expression seems to confirm this Interpretation ; for he says, “ The Earth “ was Void.” That is, it had no Creature upon it. It was void of every thing, that ever lived or moved or grew on Land or in the Water : they were all confounded and destroyed. And several of the following Expressions point out to us the Natural Means, employed by GOD to effect this great Change. It seems to have been brought about by a General Deluge ; more lasting and more fatal than that, which followed in the Days of NOAH. For it is said, that Darkness was upon the Deep ; that the Spirit of GOD moved on the Waters, which were afterwards gathered into one Place, to let the dry Land appear. From all which it is evident, that the whole Surface of the Globe was covered with Water mixed and polluted with Earth. Nor is it wonderful, that Darkness should be on the Deep, when

when the Spirit of GOD moved on the Waters. That is, when the Almighty Power put them in a violent Agitation, and thoroughly mixed them with every thing in the Caverns and on the Face of the Earth. For when the whole Globe was covered with Water, mixed with Earth, and impregnated, heated, and fermenting with all sorts of Animal, Vegetable, and Mineral Substances, the Sun must raise a Vapour, so copious, thick, and gross, as would make him invisible to Creatures upon Earth, had there been any then upon it ; who, being deprived of the Sun and Stars, the Index of their Time, could not have distinguished any Part of the Twenty-four Hours from another.

But when it pleased GOD to abate this Agitation and Ferment, the grosser Particles of the Vapour naturally fell back to the Earth. And then it was, that GOD said, " Let there be Light, and there " was Light :" that is, the Sun shone a-

gain on our Globe, and might give a Sensation of Light to Animals (soon to be placed there) by impelling the Ether on the Eye. And the Earth, by its Rotation on its Axis, again separated the Light from the Darkness, and Day from Night : and the Evening and the Morning were distinguishable by the Setting and Rising of the Sun. For we are not to imagine, that Light in general was then created : and that it did not exist before that Period. Light has ever been : and is (with Reverence let me speak it) a Property of the Deity. The Scripture tells us, God is Light : he dwelleth in Light : he decketh himself with Light as with a Garment : in him is no Darkness : the Darkness and Light to him are both alike. Thus our great, sublime, and philosophical Poet, addressing himself to the Light, says,

—*Before the Sun,  
Before the Heavens thou wert—  
and endeavouring to convey to our  
weak*

weak Understanding some Idea, tho' imperfect, of its Nature, he calls it,

*Of the Eternal Co-eternal Beam :  
Bright Effluence of bright Essence increase <sup>a</sup>.*

After the grosser Parts of this thick Vapour had fallen back on the Globe, the lighter watery Particles remained suspended in the Air ; which divided them from the Waters on the Face of the Globe ; and which MOSES, to comply with the Vulgar Phrase and Apprehension, calls the Firmament and the Heaven.

When the Agitation of the Waters ceased ; the Waters under the Heavens, that is, on the Surface of the Globe, would naturally subside, or be gathered together, or run into such Cavities as GOD had provided for them ; and the dry Land must of course appear ; and by so tho-

<sup>a</sup> MILTON, Par Loft, Book III.

rough a Mixture of Manure of all Sorts must be very well prepared to nourish all kinds of Vegetables, the Grafs, the Herb yielding Seed, and the Fruit-tree yielding Fruit ; which GOD was then pleased to plant upon it.

When the Air grew clear and serene, the Sun, the Moon, and the Stars became visible ; which MOSES places in the Firmament of the Heaven ; to make himself intelligible to the Vulgar ; who call every thing Heaven, that appears in the Air over their Heads, and cannot distinguish the Distance of the Clouds from the Heavenly Bodies, nor of one Celestial Globe from another. He does but just mention the Stars, (which compose so vast a Part of the Universe) because it was foreign and unnecessary to his Subject. And he mentions the Sun and Moon, only as they have a Relation to our Globe, and not to the rest of our Planetary System. He speaks of them according

according to the Conceptions of the Vulgar : he calls the Moon a Light as well as the Sun ; the last the greater to rule the Day, and the other to rule the Night ; and to be for Signs, for Seasons, for Days, and Years ; that is, to distinguish to us the necessary Divisions and Memorials of our Time.

Aftwards : when both Water and Air were settled, and clear, and fit to receive their Inhabitants ; then GOD created every thing living and moving, which the Waters brought forth in abundance according to their kind ; and every feathered Fowl according to his kind.

Lastly : when the Earth was become firm ; and was clad with Vegetables ; GOD made all Sorts of terrestrial Animals ; to whom he gave them for Food : and last of all the noblest of them all, Man, to whom he gave Dominion over all the rest.

Thus,

Thus, MOSES says, “ the Heavens and “ the Earth were finished, and all the “ Host of them :” that is, all Creatures in the Air, the Waters, and the Earth. And to this Performance he assigns Six Days. This Account of the Work, and of its Duration, if applied to such an Alteration of the Surface of our Globe only, may (from the first Appearance of the Light) bear even a literal Interpretation. But if it be applied to the Creation of the Universe in the manner there described, it is contrary to Reason and to Fact, and derogates from the Wisdom and Dignity of the Creator.

For it represents GOD, working Six Days, to produce and form all things ; which, it is more reasonable to suppose, were perfected in an Instant by his Will. It represents the Frame of the World in several Particulars different from what it really is : for it supposes with the Vulgar our little Planet (without mentioning

ing the others) to be the principal Part of the Creation; and the Sun, Moon, and Stars, (all indiscriminately mentioned as Luminaries) as subservient to that alone. It mentions the Creation of Light, which (as I said before) must have been from Eternity. It mentions Waters above the Firmament. Which as well as the Firmament are no where to be found; unless you understand the Waters to be the Clouds or Exhalations; and the Firmament the Air that supports them. It represents the Six Days Work, as divided into very unequal and unnatural Tasks or Portions. On the First Day was created Heaven; and Earth shapeless, void, and dark; and Light. On the Second, the Firmament, dividing the Waters beneath it from those above. On the Third, the Sea, Land, and Vegetables. On the Fourth, the Sun, Moon, and Stars. On the Fifth, Fish, and Fowl. On the Sixth, all terrestrial Animals, and Man.

Such

Such an Interpretation can never be adopted; and tho' that, which I have before given, may perhaps be New, it appears to me the most Rational. It makes MOSES speak a Language, intelligible at the same time; both to the Vulgar, and to the Philosopher. Whereas a literal Interpretation is full of Absurdities. And whoever puts such a Construction on any Part of Scripture, does not support, but undermines its Authority; contributes to makes Infidels and not Believers. And since Men have now clearer Conceptions of the Structure of the Universe; since the Ptolemaic System has given place to the Copernican; and Fiction to Reality; it is right to employ the Lights which GOD has afforded them, to illustrate his Works; and they are more capable now to explain the Mosaical Account of the Creation, than they were in darker and more ignorant Ages.

In

In the last place, Moses gives an Account of the Original of the Present Race of Mankind: whom he derives from One Pair only. And in the Description of their Formation, Nature, State, and Situation, he shadows Truth, under Allegory and Fiction, to make it the more agreeable. He says, God formed Man, in his own Image, after his own Likeness; out of the Dust of the Ground: and breathed into his Nostrils the Breath of Life. The Meaning is, that he created him with a Spiritual and Immortal Soul, but with a Material and Earthly Body. He says, God made Woman out of his Rib: meaning by such a Representation to inspire mutual and cordial Affection between them, as being of one Nature, and to inculcate the Dependance of the Woman on the Man. He says, God put them into Eden, i. e. placed them in a State of Happiness; till the Woman (the weaker in Understanding) was

was tempted by the Serpent, i. e. her own vicious Inclinations, to eat the forbidden Fruit, i. e. to commit Sin, and to tempt the Man to do the same; for which they were turned out of Paradise, i. e. lost their Happiness with their Innocence. For Innocent they were, and must have been, at the Instant of their Creation, not having had time to commit Sin; and consequently must have been as happy, as a clear Conscience, and the Health and Vigour both of Body and Mind, which GOD then bestowed on them, could make them. And how they were driven out of this Paradise by Sin, let every Guilty Man's Conscience inform him.

How natural and just is such an Allegorical Interpretation! But to imagine the Account to be a literal History is, I think, inconsistent with Reason, and any true or pure Conception of the Deity. To conceive, that GOD formed Man mechanically

chanically from the Dust, and breathed in his Face ; that he took a Rib from the Man when asleep to form the Woman ; that he planted a particular Garden for them to reside in, exclusive of the rest of the Globe, which was to remain uninhabited ; that in the Garden, there was one Tree whose Fruit could give Knowledge, and another whose Fruit could give Life ; that the Serpent spoke to the Woman ; that the eating of one Fruit could make Man sinful and mortal, or of another immortal ; that GOD made Coats for them ; that he drove them out of the Garden ; and that he placed Cherubims with flaming Swords to guard the Tree of Life ; are such Opinions as seem to me to require no Confutation.

As Man at his Creation must have been placed on some one particular Spot of this Globe ; and could only have the spontaneous Product of it for his Nutri-

ment ; GOD placed him in a Climate, where he made to grow out of the Ground every Tree pleasant to the Sight, and good for Meats. This Place was a real Eden or Garden : and the first Pair alone, Strangers to Sin and Shame, a while enjoyed a perfect Paradise. MOSES describes the Situation of this Place by the names of Rivers and Countries known in his Time. Which Description leads many to imagine it to have been near Babylon ; and the four Rivers to be the Tigris and Euphrates before they unite, and the two Branches into which they divide before they fall into the Persian Gulf. And certainly there is no properer Place to be found on the present Surface of the Globe ; the Country being fruitful, and near the Center of the great Continent of Asia, Africa, and Europe.

Some have supposed, that before NOAH's Flood, there was a regular Disposition of Land and Water on the Surface of this

this Globe : but that the Shell of it, being broken by that Event, presents us with the several Irregularities now to be observed in the Map of it. I can not subscribe to that Opinion ; which is scarce reconcileable to the Account of MOSES ; who mentions Mountains before the Flood, and the same Situation of Rivers before and since : and says, the Dove returned to the Ark with a Leaf pluckt from an Olive ; which shews, that the Waters, tho' deep, were still, and could not occasion such a Change. I imagine, it is owing to earlier Causes ; and perhaps not to one but to many ; and I conceive the Great Deluge immediately before the Creation of ADAM, when the Spirit of GOD moved on the Waters, to have had a principal Share in it.

It is next to be considered, if it is possible and probable, that the Globe could be peopled from one Pair. For if

it could ; it seems a noble Design of Providence to abate the Pride and Ambition, and to promote the Charity and Benevolence of Men, by affording them this Subject of Reflection, that however distant others may be in Condition or Situation, however different in Custom or Complexion, they are still their Brethren, and derived from one common Mass. And when Man came fresh (as I may say) out of the Mint, in perfect Vigor of Body and Mind, without Diseases derived from his Parents or contracted by Intemperance, and living on the Fruits of the Earth ; no wonder, that he lived longer than Men do now ; and begat Sons and Daughters to the great Age which MOSES ascribes to him. Thus we see Natural Causes concurring with the Designs of Providence for the more speedy peopling of the Globe. And whoever computes the Numbers, that might descend from one Pair and their Posterity,

Posterity, in the Space of <sup>c</sup> above sixteen Centuries between the Creation and the Deluge, I believe will find, that the Globe must have been better peopled at the time of the Deluge, than it has been at any time since. And as Individuals attaining to such Ages must have a Degree of Knowledge and Experience beyond our Comprehension ; and by the help of one Language might maintain a most extensive Correspondence ; all Arts and Sciences, as well as Commerce and Navigation, must have been carried to great Perfection : nor could NOAH, when six hundred Years old, want Skill to build the great Floating Vessel which saved the Remnant of Mankind.

The Dimensions of the Ark, as given by MOSES, is esteemed one Proof of the divine Authority of his Writings : since

<sup>c</sup> The Bishop of MEAUX (in his Discourse sur l' Histoire Universelle) makes it 1656.—MR. WHISTON (in his Chronological Tables differing from other Writers) only 1307.

a Vessel of that Form and Capacity is found by the Examination of the best Mathematicians, not only to be well contrived, but of an ample Size, to hold NOAH and his Family, each Species of Birds, Quadrupeds and creeping Things, with Provisions for their Subsistence for a longer time than the Waters covered the Earth. But to collect each Species together, and to cause them to enter into the Ark, are things that exceed human Power, and require the Interposition of Providence. So likewise, tho' I can conceive there may be Water enough in the Clouds, the Ocean, and the great Deep, to cover the Globe; yet I cannot conceive how it could be raised out of the Ocean and the Deep above the Mountains, without a like Interposition of Providence. It is certain, that GOD can, tho' he seldom does, act out of the common Course of Nature: whenever he does, it is for great

great and wise Ends, and in Affairs of general Concern : Now what more momentous Occasion can we imagine on our Globe, than the Destruction of Mankind for their Wickedness, all to a few Persons, who and their Posterity were warned by so terrible an Event, to be more virtuous, and to revere GOD's Power and Justice.

After the Flood, Man was permitted to feed on Animals ; and Luxury and Intemperance, as well as divine Appointment, might have some Share in abridging the Term of his Life. And as Providence was visible in the long Lives of the Posterity of ADAM, for the more speedy peopling of the Globe ; it is no less visible in the shorter Lives of the Posterity of NOAH, that it might not be over-peopled. In the former Period, for the first Eight or Nine Hundred Years, there were continual Births with-

out Burials ; whereas in our Age the first do but little exceed the last.

Another Instance of Providence MOSES gives us is, the Confusion of Tongues : which, tho' miraculous, is not more so than the bestowing the Use of Language on Man immediately on his Creation. This Difference of Language compelled Mankind to divide into Clans, and to settle in different Places ; and by dispersing them naturally contributed to the peopling of the Earth.

As MOSES derives Man and all terrestrial Animals from the Ark ; it is found difficult to account, how some of them arrived from Mount Ararat to the Places where they have been since found. How came the People into America, which COLUMBUS found there ? Or, several Species of Animals, not to be met with in our Hemisphere ? How came into Islands venomous and fierce Creatures, which Men would rather avoid, than

than convey to such Abodes? Or, how came the Negroes to differ so much in Complexion from other Men, if descended from the same Parents? These Questions are best answered by others. Does not North America join to our Continent? Is it a longer Voyage from some Part of the African Coast to Brazil, than it is from London to the Mediterranean? Were not the Coasts of Asia early peopled? And are not the Inhabitants of them to be supposed to be soon acquainted with the Art of Navigation? What do we know of their History? Are we informed of all the Voyages they have made? Or, can we assert, that None have been made from Asia or Africa to America from the Flood to the Days of COLUMBUS? Can we say, there has been no Alteration in the Surface of the Globe in so long a Space of Time by subterraneous Eruptions and other Accidents? And that many

many Islands have not been broken by them from the Continent? Does not the Climate vary Men's Complexions? Was a fair Man ever known a Native of Guinea? or a Negroe of the Polar Circle? Let me ask too some other Questions. Was there a Deluge, or was there not? And if there was, was it total? If there was not a Deluge, or if it was not total, how come <sup>f</sup> Marine Fossils to be found in Inland Parts all over the Globe? And if there was a total Deluge, how could any terrestrial Animals escape, but by some such Means as MOSES describes?

So much for the Philosophy of MOSES. I shall now consider him as an Historian: the First and the only one, who gives any Account of above Twenty-five Centuries,

<sup>f</sup> In Ab. of Phil. Tran. Vol. IV. Part 2. Pag. 270. by JONES, it is said; She-shells and the Teeth and Bones of Marine Animals occur almost every where and in all Countries; and have been shewn to be all Remains of the Universal Deluge.

Centuries, which passed from ADAM to his own Time. In this Account he comprehends the Creation (or rather Renovation of the Face of our Globe) and the Deluge : two most memorable Events, and most necessary to be known to the present Race of Mankind. He gives but few Particulars of what passed in above Sixteen Centuries between the Creation and the Deluge : but informs us in general, that that Calamity was brought on the Antediluvians for their Wickedness. Nor was it at all necessary to be minute in relating the Affairs of a Race of Men long since extinct ; and whose Memorial (but for his History) must have perished with them. He has set forth a Pedigree from ADAM to MOSES, with that Plainness and Simplicity, as well as Perspicuity and Precision, as gives great Credit to his History ; and leaves little or no Room to doubt of its Veracity. The same may be said of several Pedigrees, which

which he derives from NOAH, to ABRAHAM the Father of the Faithful, and to several others, who were Founders of neighbouring Nations.

Nor is it to be wondered at, that MOSES should have clear Information of the earliest Ages ; when we consider the long Life of Man before the Flood. NOAH (if I mistake not) was cotemporary with SETH and with ABRAHAM : and might inform ABRAHAM of his being saved from the Deluge himself, and of what he had heard from the Son of ADAM concerning the Creation. Events too interesting, for ABRAHAM not to transmit to his Posterity, or for MOSES not to learn from his great Ancestor : for ABRAHAM was Great Grand-father to LEVI ; as LEVI was to MOSES.

As MOSES is the most ancient Writer, his History can receive no Confirmation from the concurrent Testimony of Authors near his own Time. Yet it is

is much confirmed by the Traditions, which have prevailed amongst most ancient Nations concerning a Chaos, out of which the Earth was formed, and a General Deluge : which Poets have confounded, and obscured, with many Fables of their own Invention.

But the strongest Evidence of the Truth of the History of MOSES are the People of the Jews themselves. Who, when it was published, must know almost every Circumstance of it, that related to their own Nation. Who were Eye-witnesses to what passed in Egypt and the Wilderness. Who were in Fact settled under his Institutions in the Land of Canaan ; where they were found in After-Ages governed by them. Who, before CHRIST, were punished by GOD for forsaking of them : and who since have been punished by Man for adhering to them. And who in the midst of Persecution do still firmly adhere to them,

above

above 3000 Years after their Publication. As if GOD intended they should always remain a living Evidence of the Truth of his Word delivered to the World by this his first great Prophet, in which Character I shall now consider him.

By Prophets I would be understood to mean Persons chosen and inspired by GOD to publish his Decrees to Mankind ; to manifest his Wisdom by their Precepts ; his Power by their Miracles ; and his Prescience by their Predictions.

The Predictions to be found in the Writings of MOSES are what I meant by the Prophetical Part of them : and are such as were made known by GOD to him, or to Others who lived before him, and concern either Mankind in general, or the Jews in particular.

The first Prediction, that concerns Mankind in general, is contained in the Allegorical Account of the Fall : *viz.* that the Seed of the Serpent should bruise

bruise the Heel of the Woman, and her Seed the Serpent's Head. As all the Allegory is full of important Truths, we cannot suppose this Part to be without its Meaning. I take the Meaning to be, that tho' the Race of ADAM will always be pursued, attacked, and disturbed, by the Temptations of their own vicious Inclinations to commit Sin ; yet GOD will raise up among them Prophets, who shall furnish them with divine Means to vanquish such Temptations. And therefore the Learned with Justice principally apply this Prediction to CHRIST : whom his Followers allow to be a Prophet, and more than a Prophet, sent into the World to save Mankind.

Another Prediction of general Concern to Man is GOD's Promise to ABRAHAM, confirmed to ISAAC and JACOB, that in their Seed all the Nations of the Earth shall be blessed. This Prediction confirms the former ; and at the same time

time informs them where to look for their Prophets, and that Salvation is only to be expected from Israel : but not from any Prophet before the time of DAVID : because God honoured him with a Promise, that the great Prophet and King of Mankind should descend from him. From this Quarter the Jews have always expected their MESSIAH, in whom all Nations were to be blessed, according to GOD's Promise to their Forefather ABRAHAM ; and such a one they still expect. Though the Followers of CHRIST assert, that the Prophecy was compleated by his Appearance on Earth : and that he is that Promised Redeemer. As we hope to prove in its proper Place.

I shall take Notice but of Two Predictions in the Writings of MOSES relating to the Jews in particular.

The First is GOD's Promise to ABRAHAM ; that he would give the Land of Canaan to his Posterity, and make of them

them there a mighty Nation. This was <sup>g</sup> above 450 Years before MOSES conducted them to the Borders of that Land ; which they took Possession of soon after his Death ; and grew up there under the Conduct of their Judges ; till they arrived at very great Power in the Reigns of DAVID and SOLOMON.

The Second is the Promise of temporal Blessings to them, whilst they worshipped the true GOD, and kept his Commandments ; and of temporal Judgments, whenever they fell to Idolatry ; a Prophecy verified by the whole Series of their History <sup>h</sup> for near 1500 Years from MOSES to CHRIST.

As to the Moral Part of the Writings of MOSES, it is set forth in the Decalogue, which teaches us to acknowledge One only true GOD ; to revere his Name ;

G and

<sup>g</sup> Both the Bishop of MEAUX and WHISTON make it about 470.

<sup>h</sup> Both the Bishop and WHISTON make it above 1490.

and to adore him : to honour all Men, to injure no Man, in Person or in Property, either by Deed, Word, or Thought ; a set of Precepts so short, that All may remember ; so clear, that None can mistake ; so excellent, that All must approve : worthy to be written by the Finger of GOD, and engraven on the Heart of Man : and which must remain an immutable Law as long as he inhabits this Globe.

The Political Part of the Writings of MOSES contains the Laws for the Civil Government of the Jews ; which are a never-failing Proof of the Wisdom of the Legislator. In all Nations the principal Duties of Morality have been guarded with Penalties to punish the Breach of them. These Penalties are well adapted by the Mosaical Law to the Nature of the Offence. To instance first in the Offences against the Decalogue. Idolatry, Blasphemy, Sabbath-breaking,

Striking

Striking or Cursing of Parents, Murder, and Adultery, are punished with Death. Theft with five-fold Retribution. False Evidence with the Payment of the full Damage it might occasion. Inferior Hurts to the Person with Retaliation : an Eye for an Eye, and a Tooth for a Tooth : and if done to a Bond Servant, to be recompenced with Freedom. The Trespasser on Lands was to make Restitution out of the best Product of his own. Unnatural Pollutions are capitally punished. Incestuous are prohibited. Marriages with Strangers are prohibited for fear of Idolatry. Children accused of Vice by their Parents to the Magistrate were to suffer Death. If a betrothed Virgin was known in the City, both she and the Man were to die : if in the Field, the Man only. If the Virgin was not betrothed, the Man was to pay a Ransom to her Parents, and to take her and never to put her away. The He-

brew Servant after six Years was to be free. They were to rise up to the hoary Head. Not to vex the Stranger. To help the Fatherless and Widow. To keep and restore Things lost or stray'd to the Owner. To ease the Afs of their Enemy sinking under his Burthen. To leave the Gleanings of their Harvest and Vineyard to the Poor: to open the Hand wide to him. Not to oppress the hired Servant; but to pay him before the going down of the Sun. Not to lend upon Usury or Pledge. Not to remove the Neighbour's Land-mark. Not to keep a great and a small, but one just Weight and Measure. Judges were not to take a Gift to blind them: nor to wrest their Judgment in the Cause of the Poor or of the Mighty: were to have the Matter proved by two or more Witnesses: And in corporal Punishments were not to order above Forty Stripes.—And to crown all, every one was to love his Neighbour

as himself. These, with many other of the Laws of MOSES (too numerous to be here inserted) compose a more excellent System of human Policy than any that either before or since hath appeared in the World; and the good Effects of them were manifest through many Ages by Experience: for the Jews (except during their Captivity) lived under them from the time of MOSES to the Destruction of Jerusalem; a much longer Period than the Spartans continued under the Laws of LYCURGUS.

In the Religious Part of the Mosaical Writings is to be found a general History of Religion from ADAM to MOSES; and the general Scheme of Providence for the preserving the Knowledge and Worship of the true God on Earth, as long as the Posterity of ADAM shall remain upon it: shewing how by Man's natural Depravity it was gradually contracted, and confined to the Seed of ABRAHAM;

and foretelling, that from them it should at last be spread over the Face of the Earth.

From ADAM to NOAH Man was guided by his own Reason, joined to such Traditions as he received from ADAM concerning GOD and the Creation ; which proved too weak a Defence against his own vicious Inclinations.

Though the Terrors of the Deluge were added to the former Motives to a good Life, yet they all proved insufficient ; and NOAH was scarce dead, before a second Deluge of Impiety spread itself amongst Men. Which made the Almighty chuse ABRAHAM, and set a carnal Seal on him and his Posterity, as Persons designed by him, to preserve the Honour of his Name and Worship, and to punish the Idolatry of other Nations : which was become very general, when the Children of Israel left Egypt : and such is the Force of Custom on Vulgar Minds ; that even they

they were seduced ; and prevailed on AARON to consent to making the Golden Calf in the Wilderness.

The better to secure Man against this Infatuation, and to preserve Natural Religion pure and undefiled, it now pleased GOD to assist his Reason by a written Law, delivered to MOSES, to remain to all Generations. Written by GOD on Tables of Stone ; and delivered to MOSES with the most awful and tremendous Signs of Divine Power in the Sight of all the People ; to be kept (as it deserved) in the Ark of the Covenant, in the most sacred Place of the Tabernacle and Temple, between the Cherubim, and honoured with visible Marks of the Divine Presence and Protection.

To worship GOD is a Part of Natural Religion, enjoined by this Law. But as Men cannot join in Publick Worship without observing some outward Form, it is necessary to establish some Form for the

Use of the People. The Form established by Moses was full of Pomp and Ceremony : intended partly, that the People might not think it meaner than the Worship of the idolatrous Nations round about them ; but principally, to distinguish them from those Nations. For there was scarce a Ceremony or Observance, but what was ordained to perpetuate the Memory of some signal Mercy or Deliverance, which they had received either in Egypt or the Wilderness ; and which perhaps was to be a Type to Mankind of some greater Mercy or Deliverance to come. But these Ceremonies, considered in themselves alone, were vain ; were burthensome in the Performance : some were temporary : others were local, as the coming annually to the Tabernacle or Temple to worship. Which Ceremonies, though necessary to keep the Jews united among themselves, and a distinct People from others for a Time, are

are absolutely incompatible with a Religion that must be general to all Mankind. And MOSES himself declares it a Form, that is to give place to a better; where he says, “ A Prophet shall the L ORD raise up unto you, like unto me, from among you, even of thy Brethren; unto him shall ye hearken. And G OD will put his Words in his Mouth; and he shall speak all that he commands him: and whosoever will not hearken to the Words, which he shall speak in G OD’s Name, G OD will require it of him.”

Such are the Writings of MOSES.—Which not only bear in themselves the Marks of a Divine Original: but are proved to be so by the Miracles attending their Promulgation; and by the Accomplishment of many Prophecies contained in them; which are a strong Assurance that the rest will be accomplished.

When

When MOSES was called by GOD ; his Commission was attested by Fire in the Bush unconsumed, and by a Voice from Heaven ; and a Rod was delivered to him, as the Ensign of his Power, by which he performed most amazing Wonders, in Egypt, the Red Sea, and the Wilderness. And when the Commandments were delivered to him on Mount Sinai, there were Thunders, and Lightnings, and the Sound of the Trumpet exceeding loud : and all the People was afraid : and when they stood round the nether part of the Mount, it was all on Smoke, because the Lord came down upon it in Fire ; and all the Mount trembled exceedingly. And when the Sound of the Trumpet blew long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and the LORD answered him by Voice.

Though all these things are very wonderful, yet are they incontestable. There is scarce a Miracle wrought by the Hand  
of

of MOSES without a Million of Witnesses. All Egypt saw and felt those performed there; as did all the Congregation of ISRAEL those in the Wilderness. If the People had not seen them, MOSES could never have related them to that very People, as things which they had seen: and if the People assembled had seen them, they could not afterwards deny them. He daily reminds them of these Miracles; appeals to them as Facts, which they had seen and could not deny, and which were worthy to be had in remembrance. As such they are beautifully described by the sacred Writers; and have been justly celebrated through all Ages.

Another Proof of the Divine Original of the Writings of MOSES is the Accomplishment of the Prophecies contained in them. By that we are to judge if the LORD hath spoken it; for he declareth by MOSES, that if a Prophet speak

speak in his Name, and the thing come not to pass, the Prophet hath spoken presumptuously.

I have before taken notice, that the Prophecies of MOSES relating to the Settlement of the Children of ISRAEL in Canaan, and to their Happiness or Misery as they were obedient or disobedient to the Law, have been accomplished.

There remains behind the great and important Prophecy concerning the MESSIAH ; of the Seed of the Woman, who is to bruise the Serpent's Head ; of the Seed of ABRAHAM, in whom all Nations are to be blessed ; like unto MOSES, whom they are to hear ; who is to speak to them all that GOD commands ; and to whose Words if they do not hearken, GOD will require it of them. Let us then consider, if such a Prophet has yet appeared ; and if he has, how far the

Ends

Ends of his Mission have been accomplished.

The Author, who added the last Chapter of Deuteronomy to the Writings of MOSES, which gives an account of his Death and Character, says, " that there arose not a Prophet since in ISRAEL like unto him, whom the LORD knew Face to Face ; in all the Miracles and Wonders which he sent him to do in the Land of Egypt ; and in all that mighty Hand, and all that great Fear, which he wrought in the sight of all ISRAEL." This is supposed to be added by EZRA after the Return from the Captivity. Before the time of EZRA, SAMUEL, DAVID, ELIJA, ELISHA, and almost all the Prophets whose Writings are contained in the Bible, had appeared. Consequently none of them could be the MESSIAH : and far from claiming the Character, those sacred Writers, as well as MOSES, foretell his Coming. From

the

the time of MALACHI after the Captivity there appeared no Prophet till JOHN the Baptist; who expressly declares he was not that Prophet, and not worthy to unloose the Latchet of his Shoe; but that he was near at hand; meaning JESUS of Nazareth, the only Person, who ever till that time claimed the Title.

Let us first examine what external Circumstances there are to support this Claim: and then, whether it is supported by his Life and Doctrine.

But before I enter on this Subject, let me premise once for all, that I understand every thing said in Scripture concerning JESUS CHRIST to relate to this Globe only. That GOD has ordained him the Guide, the Prophet, the Judge, the Prince, the Saviour, and the Redeemer of the Race of ADAM only: that as Man he suffered only for Men, and on Earth for Sins only committed on Earth: that GOD hath united him to himself

himself in a peculiar manner for those purposes ; as he may have done other intelligent Beings in other Planets for similar Ends. That the Son of DAVID has not, nor ever will have, more Authority there, than they have or can have here. And we may as well expect a Saviour or Prophet from Mercury or Jupiter, as they One from hence.

This is, and ought always to be thought the genuine Interpretation of Scripture : and we should not draw any other Conclusions from any general Expressions found there : for to make it contradict Nature is to destroy its Authority ; and to cause that, which rightly understood is most rational, to be most absurd and incredible.

That there was such a Person as JESUS of Nazareth can no more be doubted, than that there was such a Prince as AUGUSTUS CÆSAR, in whose Reign he was born. His Life is proved, by the

Writings

Writings of his own Disciples, who were Eye-witnesses to the Particulars of it which they have related : by the concurrent Testimony of other Authors both Jewish and Pagan : by the Admission and Confession of even the most inveterate Enemies to Christianity : and by the number of Christians, who have ever since professed this Religion, which could not have been at first taught and established without some real Author of it.

The Life of JESUS was not (like that of MOSES) writ by himself, but by others. The Four Evangelists are his Biographers ; and there are the strongest Reasons to convince us of the Truth of their Relation ; and that it is come down to us without any material Alterations.

1. Two of the Evangelists were his Disciples and Apostles, and Eye-witnesses of the Facts they relate. A Third was a Companion of St. PETER, who was so : and the Fourth of St. PAUL,  
who

who had been miraculously converted and instructed. Their Accounts, tho' published in distant Places and different Periods of Time, all agree in the principal Facts: and yet evidently appear not to be copied from each other, because each in some Instances supply Circumstances omitted by the rest. The Writings of the other Apostles in the New Testament bear witness of their Truth: as cotemporary Jewish and Pagan Authors do to the Truth of those Facts, which in their Nature are of public Notoriety, and which could not escape their Notice, if true. The Apostles, while on Earth, spent their whole Lives in convincing the rest of Mankind of the Truth of it. They dispersed themselves over great part of the Globe to propagate the Story; in which, how distantly soever dispersed, they all continued to agree. They told it in Languages they had never learned; they confirmed it by Miracles, which

none else could perform ; and tho' most of them Men of mean Fortune and Education courageously asserted the Truth of it before the Rulers of the Earth ; and voluntarily exposed themselves to Persecution and to Death to support the Credit of it. Is it possible to conceive, that Men generally so illiterate and low should invent such a Story, and be at such Labour and Pains, and persist so obstinately to impose it on Mankind, without any View of worldly Advantage to themselves, but even to their own Destruction ? or that whole Armies of Martyrs in or near their Times, who had recent Evidence of what had passed, should seal it with their Blood ?

2. As the Evangelists and Apostles were careful to preserve the Memory of the Life and Actions of their LORD and MASTER in their Writings ; their Followers were no less careful to preserve those Writings. As soon as the Gospels were published,

published, they carried Copies of them to the Churches then established; where the Persons converted by the Apostles found them to agree with the Traditions before delivered to them. Such Copies were kept with great Care: and in what distant and different Parts soever they have been since found, they have been found to agree with each other, and with the Quotations made from them by the Fathers and other ancient Writers of the Church. And whatever little Variations may have crept in by the Error of Transcribers or Translators, or have been attempted by the blind Zeal of late Ages, no Writing of Antiquity is come down purer to us than the Gospel, nor has any so many Proofs of being Genuine and Authentick.

This being premised; let us examine whether the Character of JESUS, as set forth in the Gospel, answers to that of the promised MESSIAH.

The MESSIAH was to be of the House of DAVID : JESUS in the Pedigrees set forth by St. MATTHEW and St. LUKE is derived from that Prince and his House.

The MESSIAH was to be born of a Virgin : JESUS is related to have been so. This is a Miracle ; that is, an Event out of the common course of Nature. Nor are Miracles to be wondered at on so important and solemn an Occasion : and that it pleased GOD to point out to Mankind their Head and their Guide by peculiar Marks of Distinction to notify his Arrival amongst them.

Many other Prophecies there are concerning the MESSIAH, which the Evangelists and Apostles (who were best acquainted with them) say were fulfilled in JESUS. Such was his very Name : the Place of his Birth : the Massacre of the Children in Bethlehem : his Return out of Egypt : his Residence at Nazareth : the Preaching of JOHN in the Wilderness :

ness : his leaving Nazareth to dwell at Capernaum : his riding into Jerusalem on an Ass with her Fole : the casting out those who bought and sold in the Temple : his being sold for thirty Pieces of Silver, which bought the Potters Field : the parting of his Garment, and casting lots on his Vesture : his being crucified between Thieves, and numbered with Transgressors : the giving him Gall to eat and Vinegar to drink : the not breaking his Bones : the piercing his Side : and his not seeing Corruption in the Grave.

And GOD was pleased still more manifestly to declare his Appearance on Earth by Miracles. An Angel foretold it to the Virgin. Angels notified it to the Shepherds. A Star (i. e. Meteor) conducted the Wise Men to the Place of it. Voices from Heaven proclaimed him the Son of GOD and a Prophet, at his Baptism, at his Transfiguration, and at his Appearance to St. PAUL. Unnatural Darkness co-

vered the Earth at his Death. And a great Earthquake rent the Veil of the Temple. He fasted forty Days. He walked on the Sea. Was transfigured before some of his Disciples. Was seen by them and five hundred others at once after his Death. Visibly ascended from Earth, and disappeared from amongst Men. And afterwards appeared in a Vision to St. PAUL going to Damascus : and last of all to St. JOHN in the Isle of Patmos.

If any further Proof is required, that JESUS was the MESSIAH, we may appeal to his Character, his Life, his Miracles, his Prophecies, and his Doctrine.

1. He was himself a Pattern of those Virtues, which he recommends to his Followers : and the only Person of the Race of ADAM free from Sin. His superior Worth drew on him Hatred, Malice, and Persecution ; to which he made no other return than Patience and Forgiveness.

giveness. And when he could have called for Legions of Angels to his Aid, he yielded himself up to the most cruel Indignities and Torments, and prayed for his Enemies at his Death. He was, as the Prophet describes him, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief. He was despised, and we esteemed him not. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his Mouth. He was brought as a Lamb to the Slaughter ; and as a Sheep before her Shearers was dumb. He did no Violence, neither was any Deceit in his Mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to Grief, when he made his Soul an Offering for Sin : he was wounded for our Transgressions, he was bruised for our Iniquities ; the Chastisement of our Peace was upon him, and by his Stripes we are healed.—Thus it pleased GOD, in the wonderful Dispensations of his Providence, (having before prepared Men by

a very general Notion of Expiation of Sins by Sacrifice) in this Instance to make the only Man that ever was without Sin to attone for the Sins of Mankind.

2. His Life was one continued Scene of laudable and benevolent Actions. He went about doing good ; and instructing Men how to behave in this Life so as to be happy in the next, that Life of Immortality, which he brought to light thro' his Gospel.

3. Many were the Miracles he performed to prove the Truth of his Mission and Doctrine, and which proved him to be more than Man, with Powers exceeding human. He shewed a Power of Creation, by multiplying the Loaves and Fishes : of altering the Qualities of Bodies, by changing the Water into Wine : of changing their specific Gravity, by walking on the Sea : over the vegetable Part of the Globe, by blasting the Fig-Tree : over the watery Tribe, by the wonderful

wonderful Draught of Fishes, and by taking of the Fish with the Tribute-money: over terrestrial Animals, by the Swine running headlong into the Sea: over his own Mind, by resisting all Occasion and Temptation of Sin: over his own Body, by fasting forty Days; by his Transfiguration; by his Resurrection; and by his Ascension: over the Minds of others, by curing of Lunatics, and by casting out Devils, or (as I imagine) curing of those who were furiously mad: over their Bodies, by curing all manner of Diseases; the Leper, the Woman with the bloody Issue; the Deaf, the Dumb, the Lame, and the Blind; and by raising **LAZARUS** and others from the Dead.—And how were these Miracles performed? by no other Means than his Will or his Word: often in the Absence of the Parties, an Evidence that his Power was not confined to Things near at hand; as his Prophecies are, that he knew future as well

as present Things. They were not performed in a Corner, but before thousands : the Fame of them went through Palestine and Syria : Multitudes resorted to JESUS, and brought Persons to be cured of all manner of Diseases : the Persons cured published the Facts, of which several of them remained living Witnesses many Years after CHRIST's Death and Resurrection. The Facts were so strongly attested, that the most inveterate Enemies of Christianity could not deny them ; and found no better Subterfuge, than to ascribe them to Magic, or as the Jews expressed it, that he cast out Devils by Belzebub : a Supposition equally weak and wicked, and which is confuted and exposed by CHRIST himself.

4. The Prophecies of CHRIST relate either to himself ; to his Disciples ; to the Jews ; to the Christians ; or to Mankind in general.

i. As

1. As to himself: he foretold, that he should be betrayed to the Chief Priests, and unto the Scribes, and that they should condemn him to Death, and should deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, to scourge and to crucify him; and that the third Day he should rise again. And that all the Tribes of the Earth should see him come again in the Clouds with Power and great Glory. The first Part of these Prophecies have been fulfilled: which is an Earnest that the last will be so.

2. As to his Disciples: he foretold some Things relating to some of them in particular: as that one that sate with him at Meat should betray him: and that PETER should deny him thrice before the Cock crew. Others he foretold of them in general: as that they should be hated and persecuted; delivered up to the Council, and scourged in the Synagogues; that they should be brought before Kings and Governours for his Sake; and that it should

should be given in the self same Hour what they should speak. These Predictions were fully verified. The Disciples, convinced of the Importance of his Mission, and of the Truth of his Doctrine, were not discouraged by any Danger from pursuing his Orders. As he told them it was enough for the Disciple to be as his Master, they took up his Cross, and followed him. They boldly entered on their Office: what he told them in Darkness they spoke in the Light; and what they heard in the Ear they preached on the House-tops. They asserted his Doctrine before the Rulers of the Earth; and, illiterate as they were, they wanted neither Argument or Language to defend it; for it happened as he had foretold, that it was not they that should speak, but the Spirit of the Father. They relied on Providence for their Guard, having learned from him, that the Hairs of their Head were all numbered, and that not a Sparrow fell to the Ground

Ground without the Father, and that they were of more Value than many Sparrows. They feared not those who could kill the Body only, being persuaded, that he who loseth his Life for CHRIST's Sake should find it. And they confirmed their Doctrine by the Miracles which, he had assured them, if they wanted not Faith, they should perform.

3. As to the Jews : he foretold, that of the Temple of Jerusalem there should not be left one Stone upon another, which should not be thrown down. That the Enemies should cast a Trench about Jerusalem, and compass her round, and keep her in on every Side, and lay *her* even with the Ground, and that they should not leave in her one Stone upon another. All which was fulfilled when it was destroyed by TITUS.

4. As to the Christians : he foretold, that in the Course of his Gospel false Christs and false Prophets should arise,  
who

who should shew Signs and Wonders, to seduce, if possible, even the Elect. **SIMON MAGUS**, and many since have verified the first Part of this Prophecy, and **MAHOMET** the last. He likewise foretold, that Men should say, See here, or see there! lo here is **CHRIST**, or there! but he commands them not to believe it; for the Kingdom of GOD cometh not with Observation (or outward Shew) but is within you. How necessary was this Caution! when we reflect how this Prophecy has been verified by the Pretensions of all the different Sects of Christians; particularly of the Pope, who calls himself the Vicar of **CHRIST**, and is called by others Antichrist. Again, though our Saviour has declared, that the Doctrine of his Gospel was Love and Peace, yet he foretold it would not entirely have that Effect: and that he was come, not to give Peace, but Division and a Sword: that Men should hate and betray one another: that

that Brother should betray Brother to Death ; the Father the Son ; and Children rise up against their Parents, and cause them to be put to Death ; and that Iniquity should abound. This Prophecy has been very sufficiently verified ; and Persecution for Religion (which was little known before the Gospel) has been carried to the greatest Excess of Cruelty, at first by the heathen Emperors against the Christians, and since by the different Sects of Christians against each other. Lastly, he foretold, that the Gospel should be preached in all the World, for a Witness to all Nations, and then shall the End come. Though the Gospel has been already preached in many different Parts of this Globe, yet the Prophecy is far from being at this Time compleated ; and therefore we need not expect the Dissolution of the World (that is, of Mankind) yet : for this Generation (that is, the Race of ADAM) shall not pass away, till all these Things

Things (of which the general preaching of the Gospel is one) be fulfilled. Heaven and Earth shall pass away, (that is, this Generation shall be taken from the Earth) but my Words shall not pass away ; that is, the Gospel shall afterwards remain, as the Record of the Trial and Sentence of the present Race of Men : and the Moral Precepts of it are eternal.

5. As to Mankind in general : he foretold his coming again in Glory to judge the whole Race of Mankind : the End of them here : the Separation of the Righteous from the Wicked : a future State of Happiness for the first, and of Misery for the last. These Prophecies remain to be fulfilled ; and I shall enlarge upon them in another Place.

5. I come now to speak of the Doctrine of CHRIST : what he commands to be done, and what to be believed.

He informs the World, that he is not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it : intimating

intimating that he is the great Prophet foretold by MOSES, who was to teach Men the perfect Will of GOD, both with regard to GOD and Man.

1. With regard to GOD. He establishes that first and great Commandment of the Law, as necessary to eternal Life, to love GOD with all the Heart, Soul, Strength and Mind. He tells us, to fear him who is not only able to destroy the Body, but to cast the Soul into Hell. He directs us to pray, but not to be seen of Men : to pray in the Closet and in secret, because GOD seeth in secret : not to use vain Repetitions, because he knoweth what we have need of before we ask : and that we may not address the Supreme Being improperly, he hath furnished us with a most short, excellent, and comprehensive Form. He hath prescribed no particular Form of publick Worship ; but hath left it to the Choice of every particular Person in private, and of every Country in public. He

neither confined himself or others to particular Times or Places of Worship. He rested not on the Sabbath from doing Good. He taught not only in the Synagogue and Temple, but on the Mountain, on the Sea, and in the Wilderness. GOD dwells not in Temples made with Hands, but in the Heart ; therefore his Worship is not local ; but, like that of CHRIST, may be exercised alike in every Part of this Globe. To serve GOD, no Man need go to a Temple at Jerusalem, a Mosque at Mecca, or St. PETER's at Rome : GOD hath erected his Temple in the Heart of Man, and consequently can in no Part of the World be destitute of Places of Worship where there are Men.

2. With regard to other Men. He teaches universal Benevolence. To look on all Mankind, of what Nation or Sect soever, as our Neighbours ; and like the good Samaritan, to assist them. To love them as ourselves. To do to them, as we would

would they should do unto us. Not to judge others, lest we be judged. Not to see their Faults, and be blind to our own. Not to be angry with our Brother without a Cause; but to love even our Enemies. Not to curse our Brother, or call him Fool; but to bless those who curse us. Not to retaliate Injuries, or resist Evil, but to him that smiteth us on the right Cheek, to turn the other also. To do Good to them that hate us. To pray for them that despitefully use us, and persecute us. To forgive an offending Brother not seven times only, but seventy times seven; the Condition on which GOD will forgive us. To live thus peaceably with others; and to be Peace-makers amongst others, with the Promise of a Blessing, if we are so. This is our Duty to others, as private Men. As Members of the State, we are to give unto CÆSAR the Things that are

CÆSAR's; Tribute to whom Tribute is due; Honour to whom Honour.

3. With regard to a Man's self. He teaches us to be poor in Spirit, meek, merciful, poor in Heart, hungring and thirsting after Righteousness, and exceeding glad when reviled and persecuted for it's sake. Masters of our carnal Affections, so as not to look on a Woman to lust after her. We are to let our Light shine before Men, that they may see our good Works; but not to be ostentatious of them. When we do Alms, we are not to let the Left-hand know what the Right-hand doth. When we pray, 'tis not to be in the Corners of the Street, but in the Closet. When we fast, 'tis not to be with a sad, but a chearful Countenance. We are not to be like the Scribes and Pharisees, who do all their Works to be seen of Men; make broad their Phylacteries; enlarge the Borders of their Garments; love the uppermost Rooms at Feasts;

Feasts ; and chief Seats in the Synagogues ; and Greetings in the Market ; and to be called of Men, Rabbi, Rabbi. We cannot serve GOD and Mammon ; therefore are not to lay up Treasures on Earth, but in Heaven. Should not be solicitous for Food or Raiment ; but first seek the Kingdom of GOD and his Righteousness, and rely on his Providence for them. We are to love neither Father, Mother, Son, or Daughter, more than CHRIST ; but are to take up his Cross and follow him, (i. e. suffer like him for Righteousness Sake) for he that findeth his Life (i. e. saves it in this World by denying him) shall lose it, (i. e. in a future State) but he that loseth his Life (i. e. is a Martyr) for his Sake, shall find it (i. e. be eternally happy.)

This is the most perfect System of Morality that ever was proposed to Man. Worthy of the great Prophet foretold by MOSES, who was to teach them all they were

to do, and whom they were to hear. A Religion, not like the Jewish, requiring many vain Ceremonies, and external Performances; but only a right Disposition of the Mind, and a reasonable Employment of it's Faculties. It enjoins but two Ceremonies, in their own Nature indifferent, as Seals or Marks on it's Professors, to testify to the World their Faith and the Author of it: neither of them burdensome; but both easy to be performed in any Part of the World. The one is to be baptized in the Name of the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST: the other sometimes to eat Bread, and drink the Cup, in Remembrance of CHRIST, and his Sufferings for Mankind.

These Things the Christian Religion requires to be done. What does it require Men to believe?—One GOD: that GOD distinguished into FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST: that SON taking or uniting to himself JESUS of the House of

DAVID.

DAVID to be the eternal Prince of Mankind: that JESUS, heretofore instructing and dying for Man, now in a State of Glory interceding for him with GOD, hereafter to come again to be his Judge, and to take with him all the Righteous of the Race of ADAM into Mansions of everlasting Blifs.

This is the general Substance of the Christian Faith contained in Scripture. The Articles of it lie dispersed there: but have been collected, methodized, and presented in one summary View in several Creeds which have been formed for the Use and Ease of the Generality of Mankind, who are not able to make such Abstracts for themselves. Creeds are human Compositions; and therefore of no Authority. They are no further to be attended to than they are warranted by Scripture, which is the sole Rule of Faith. They may be proposed, but cannot be imposed. Every one, who is able,

should compare them with the Gospel, to see if they be agreeable to it. Of this a Man must judge for himself. He can have no other Opinion than his own : others cannot think for him, nor he for them. If he differs in Opinion from another concerning any Mode or Circumstance of any abstruse and mysterious Article of the Christian Faith, he does no more than different Popes, Synods, and Councils have done before on the same Points. He only exercises that Liberty which CHRIST allows. He allows Men to conjecture, but not to decide such Points which he was not pleased fully to reveal. Those Glimmerings of Light which he hath afforded us concerning them, are Intimations that what we cannot plainly discern here, will be disclosed to us hereafter. Let a Man think as he pleases about the Mysteries of Christianity, if he conforms but his Actions to the plain Precepts of it : by the first he can

hurt

hurt neither himself nor others; by the last he will most certainly benefit both. In delivering his Opinions on these Mysteries, let him be charitable, allowing to others the same Liberty of Sentiment which he assumes to himself: let him be humble, not peremptorily deciding beyond what the Scripture hath decided: but let him be confident of one Thing, that, though it may contain many Things above his Comprehension, it can contain nothing repugnant to Reason.

The Tenets which principally distinguish the Christian Religion from all others, and of which Men could have no Conception or Idea by the Light of Nature, relate, 1. To the Deity: 2. To the Union of CHRIST to the Deity: 3. To a Resurrection and Judgment preceding a future State.

As to the first. God, whose Nature is incomprehensible, hath been pleased to reveal to us, that there are three Persons  
in

in the Godhead : not three distinct Qualities or Attributes only, but three distinct intelligent Agents ; for distinct Actions and Offices are ascribed to them, which could not be to Qualities or Attributes, but must be to Persons or intelligent Agents. These three Persons are of the same Essence, and have the same Attributes ; but are distinct in Intelligence and in Operation : always willing the same ; and always acting in Harmony. They are often expressly mentioned together in Scripture : the whole Tenor of the Scripture implies, that they are distinct : and the Scripture would be unintelligible, if they are not conceived to be so : and that all Nations should conceive them to be so was the Intention of CHRIST, when he ordered them to be baptized in the Name of the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST.

The FATHER is self-existent, and supreme, the Author of all Beings, and the

Fountain

Fountain of all Power, and in the most exalted Sense GOD.

The SON is derived (or begotten) from the FATHER alone : and receiving his Being from him, consequently is not originally GOD, but GOD of GOD. Having been with the FATHER from the Beginning, that is, before all other Beings or Worlds, and before even all Computation of Time. In which Sense only he is eternal ; not in the most absolute Sense, as the Epithet is ascribed to the FATHER : for tho' he is before all Worlds, he must be after the FATHER, because he derives his Existence from him. He is begotten, not made ; that is, he is of the same Essence with the FATHER, from whom he derives his Existence : and the Expression (begotten) is used to convey that Idea to us : for in our Conception, every Thing that is begotten, is of the same Nature with that which begot it ; but nothing that is made, is of the same Nature

ture with that which made it. The Expression (begotten) is not used to convey any Idea of this Divine Generation: that is known to GOD alone. Man is ignorant of the Manner of his own Generation, or of that of any Animal or Vegetable: and it would be the most blasphemous Presumption in so inconsiderable a Creature of the Universe to attempt to explain that of the SON of GOD. Tho' the SON is of the same Substance or Essence, yet he is subordinate to the FATHER, who is greater. This is expressly said in Scripture; and is implied through the whole Tenor of it. Therefore when the Athanasian Creed says, he is equal to the FATHER as touching his Godhead, it must be understood only, that he is equally of the same Divine Nature, not equal in Authority: for he in every Thing does the Will of the FATHER. Not my Will, says he, but thine be done.

The

The third Person who has existed from the Beginning (or before all Worlds) with the other two, is the **HOLY GHOST**. The Eternal, the Holy Spirit, who spoke by the Prophets and Apostles ; by whom JESUS was conceived ; the **COMFORTER** sent by the **FATHER** and the **SON** ; to moralize and sanctify the World. Who will continue with Mankind (that is, assist) to conduct them into the Way of Truth, until they shall be removed from this Globe.

As the two last Persons derive their Existence and Authority from the **FATHER**, they are subordinate to him, who is the only supreme **GOD**, who governs all Things by their Ministration, and by and through them is worshipped and glorified ; for as **CHRIST** himself hath said, and directed us to say, His is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. But tho' the other Persons are subordinate to the **FATHER**, yet we conceive them to be  
of

of the same Nature and Perfections : in which Sense, and in which alone, the three Persons can be said or understood to be co-equal.

For in other respects, as the SON himself hath declared, the FATHER is greater than he. The FATHER is GOD of himself, the other Persons GOD of GOD. The FATHER self-existent, the others deriving their Existence from him. Some Things none knoweth save the FATHER only, others he hath revealed to the SON alone. The FATHER doth whatsoever he pleaseth, the SON only what he feeth the FATHER do: the SON and HOLY SPIRIT in all Things performing his Will. The SON is sent (or commissioned) by the FATHER; the HOLY GHOST (or COMFORTER) by the FATHER and the SON: and he that sends is greater than him that is sent. That Expression therefore in the Athanasian Creed, that none of the Persons is before or after other, none greater

or

or less than the other, but their Glory equal, is scarce reconcileable to Scripture; or to reconcile it, must be understood with great Limitations.

This Idea which we receive from Scripture, of three Divine Persons subsisting together from Eternity in the Godhead, is more cheerful than that of a Deity existing from Eternity, without any Communication of his Ideas before the Creation of the Universe.

It gives us also a more exalted Notion of the Theocracy, or GOD's Government of the Universe: when we consider the other two Persons performing the high Behests of the FATHER, and by his Order co-operating with him in the Creation, Preservation, and Sanctification, not only of this little Globe of our's, but of every Part of Nature.

But there will always remain two great Difficulties in the Doctrine of the Trinity. 1. How it is consistent with the Unity

ty of the Godhead. 2. How it is consistent with the Eternity of the SON and HOLY GHOST.

To reconcile it to the Unity, we are to believe, 1. That notwithstanding there are three distinct Persons or intelligent Agents in the Godhead, which we are not to confound, yet, as is said in the Athanasian Creed, we are not to divide the Substance, which still remains but one: for the Divine Essence, being spiritual, cannot be divided; and being infinite, cannot be multiplied. The SON is said to be in the Bosom of the FATHER; that is, wherever the FATHER is, there is the SON, and there too is the HOLY GHOST. This is very difficult for us to conceive, who borrow our Ideas from visible Objects here below: and no Parallel can be made from created Things. All created Beings occupy particular Parts of Space, and are each separated in Place from the other: the Godhead goes through

through all Space, and consequently each Person in it must be ever and throughout united. We cannot conceive three Men in this manner to be one, or to be in one Place at the same time. We cannot conceive one Man to have three Souls, three Understandings, or three Wills : or three Men to have one Soul, one Understanding, or one Will. We cannot conceive three Men, or even one Man, always to have the same Thoughts and Inclinations ; or three Men to know the Thoughts and Inclinations of each other. But GOD's Nature is not like Man's Nature ; his Thoughts like Man's Thoughts ; his Ways like Man's Ways : his Ways are unsearchable ; his Counsels impenetrable ; and his Nature incomprehensible. It is not for Man to explain this Mystery ; or to say, it is, or it is not thus. As it was at first discovered to him in Scripture, all that he can know of it he must learn from thence, and must not be wise beyond

K what

what is there written. 2. As the three Persons are but one in Essence ; so are they but one in Will and in Harmony of Action ; the SON and HOLY GHOST always either co-operating with the FATHER, or performing his Will.

The other Difficulty with regard to the Trinity, is the Eternity of the SON and HOLY GHOST. For we are at a loss to conceive, how Persons, who derive their Existence from another, should always have been ; or not ascribe a Priority to him, from whom they derive their Existence. We can conceive them to have been, as St. JOHN says, in the Beginning, before any thing was made : or, as the Nicene Creed expresses it, before all Worlds : we may impute to them a Duration beyond what either the Force of Imagination or Numbers can reach : but when we have done all, we can scarce say, as the Athanasian Creed does, that none of the Persons are before or after other :

other: or when it says they are co-eternal; ascribe the same Sort of Eternity to the two last as to the FATHER. Whenever we contemplate this Point, we must be sensible; that we cannot comprehend it in this Life; and that the Line of our Understanding is much too shallow to fathom the Depths of Eternity. It is sufficient for Christians to believe, that there are three Persons in one Godhead. The Nature of the Deity is above Man's Comprehension, as well as the Manner of the Co-existence of the three Persons in it. When Men therefore attempt to explain any Part of this Mystery, it is only proposing an Opinion, which the rest of Mankind are at Liberty to receive or reject. The Scripture is the Standard, by which such Explications are to be tried. And whether they are agreeable to Scripture every one must judge for himself. It is arrogant in any to insist on their own Sense as a necessary Rule of Faith; and

impious and unchristian to curse others, if they do not believe it. These things were revealed to make Men humble, not proud and contentious.

The next Tenet, which distinguishes the Christian Religion, is the Union of JESUS to the second Person of the Deity, by which he became both GOD and MAN, or one CHRIST. An ineffable Mystery, as well as the Trinity ! on which Men may dispute, but which they can never explain. This, as we are told in Scripture, was performed by the Operation of the HOLY GHOST : therefore he is said, in the Apostles Creed, to be conceived, in the Nicene, to be incarnate, by the HOLY GHOST. In what Manner exceeds our Comprehension ; if we cannot comprehend how Man is conceived in the natural Course, we certainly cannot this miracuolus Conception : if we cannot tell how the Soul is united to the Body, much less can we explain how the Body

Body and Soul of JESUS was united to the Deity. I think the clearest Explanation, that is to be found, of this abstruse Point, is in the Athanasian Creed, viz. That our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the SON of GOD, is GOD and MAN. GOD, of the Substance of the FATHER, begotten before the Worlds; and MAN, of the Substance of his Mother, born in the World. Perfect GOD, and perfect MAN, of a reasonable Soul and human Flesh subsisting. Equal to the FATHER, as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the FATHER, as touching his Manhood. Who, although he be GOD and MAN, yet he is not two, but one CHRIST. One; not by Conversion of the Godhead into Flesh; but by taking the Manhood into GOD. One altogether; not by Confusion of Substance, but by Unity of Person. For as the reasonable Soul and Flesh is one Man, so GOD and MAN is one CHRIST.—These Words (according

to my Apprehension) intend to shew, that JESUS, who was miraculously born of the Virgin MARY, was in a peculiar Manner united to the second Person in the Godhead. That by such Union he became CHRIST ; or the ANOINTED ; to be a Prophet to instruct, a Priest to redeem, and a King to judge and govern Mankind. That as the Union of Soul and Body compose but one Person, or one Man ; so the Union of the Soul and Body of JESUS to the second Person in the Godhead, composed but one Person, or one CHRIST. That, as the Soul and Body of a Man, which are of different Natures, still continue so whilst united ; so the Soul and Body of JESUS, which were both of a different Nature from the Godhead, still continued so after they were united to it in him. These Natures were not confounded, though united : for it is blasphemous to imagine, that GOD could be converted into Man, or Man into

into GOD. The Manner of this Union cannot be better expressed, than by saying, it was not by Conversion of the Godhead into Flesh, but by taking the Manhood into GOD, in whom all Things are contained. Not by Confusion of Substance (divine and human) but by Unity of Person ; that is, by uniting the Person of JESUS (and of JESUS only, selected from all Mankind) to the Godhead, in a more peculiar Manner, and more intimately than all other Men.

On this mysterious Subject Men have been led into great Confusion and Perplexity by two Things : 1. By not sufficiently attending to the Distinction between the SON of GOD (the second Person of the Trinity) begotten of his FATHER before all Worlds, and JESUS (who, by being peculiarly united to that Person, is likewise called the SON of GOD) born in the World. 2. By imagining, that by such Union CHRIST became LORD of the Universe ; whereas his Commission

extends only to our Planet, and the present Race of Mankind.

The Athanasian Creed is justly blameable for setting up a human Composition, as the Standard of Salvation ; and for requiring an implicit Belief of the Tenets contained in it under the Penalty of Damnation. When many have thought some of those Tenets very doubtful, and others repugnant to Scripture. But notwithstanding these glaring Imperfections, the Methods it proceeds in is better than either that of the Nicene or Apostles Creed. For it first treats of the three Persons in the Godhead, and afterwards of the Incarnation or taking of JESUS into the Godhead, and uniting him to the second Person of it. Whereas the other two Creeds, without previously setting forth the Trinity, insert the Name of JESUS between the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST. Which, if not properly attended to, and explained, may make the Generality of People confound the two Natures in CHRIST ;

CHRIST ; the divine, which existed before the World ; and the human, which was taken into or united to the divine at the Time of the Incarnation.

The Nicene Creed, after professing a Belief in the FATHER, proceeds thus : “ And in one LORD JESUS CHRIST, the only begotten SON of GOD : begotten of his FATHER before all Worlds : GOD of GOD, &c. being of one Substance with the FATHER.”—Which must be thus understood, viz. That JESUS CHRIST was the only MAN, who became the SON of GOD, by being at the time of the Incarnation united to the only begotten SON, begotten of his FATHER before all Worlds, GOD of GOD, of one Substance with the FATHER. For JESUS, as a MAN, was born in Bethlehem, of the Substance of his Mother : in the World, not before it.

The Apostles Creed, without saying any thing of the second Person of the Trinity, begotten before all Worlds, after

ter the FATHER ALMIGHTY, immediately names “ JESUS CHRIST, his only be-  
“ gotten SON, our LORD, who was con-  
“ ceived by the HOLY GHOST, born of  
“ the Virgin MARY.”— So that an ignorant Person in reading this Creed would, from the literal Sense of the Words, imagine, that before JESUS was born, there was no only begotten SON of GOD ; as he might in reading the Nicene, that JESUS was begotten before all Worlds.

The true Sense in which JESUS in Scripture is called the SON, and only begotten SON of GOD : is, 1. As he is united to the only begotten SON, or second Person of the Trinity. 2. As he is the only Man of the Race of ADAM that ever was so.

But although he is the only Man ever thus united, we must not from thence conclude, that he is the only intelligent or rational Being, that ever has been, or will be so. The SON, or second Person

the Trinity, is under the FATHER, and by his Order, the Instructor, Redeemer, Judge, and King of all such Beings, not only on our Globe, but on every Globe, and in every Quarter of the Universe : as the HOLY GHOST is their Sanctifier. In order to instruct, redeem, judge and govern the Race of ADAM, he united to himself JESUS : and for the same or similar Ends he may have, and probably hath, united to himself other rational Creatures in other Planets. JESUS is not their Saviour, nor they the Saviour of Mankind. JESUS, as to his Manhood, was of the Race of ADAM, descended from ABRAHAM and DAVID. He was sent to instruct his own Species only. He died for Men, and Men only. He suffered on Earth for Sins only committed on Earth. His Transactions here no more concern other Globes, than the Transactions there do us. To imagine that his Authority extends to other Globes is as absurd, as to

to imagine that a Magistrate in any particular State here, is a Magistrate in every other : or that a Commission to act in England, gives a Man Authority in Mexico or Japan.

I am very desirous of being thoroughly understood on this Point ; which appears to me of the last Importance to true Christianity. It has scarce been touched on, or but very lightly, by Divines : and yet it is extremely necessary it should be cleared up. Till it is cleared up, the Ideas of Men will remain very confused ; and many of the most speculative will be either Sceptics or Infidels. The Interpretation I contend for is clear and intelligible : any other, I think, shocks Nature and common Sense ; and therefore cannot be agreeable to Scripture, which through the whole requires the first Interpretation.

It may be asked, how came it then not to prevail before ? for it can scarce be asked,

asked, why should it prevail now? unless those who ask the Question will say, that Mankind ought never to grow wiser, or understand Scripture better than they did before. And as to the first Question, I think several Reasons may be assigned.

1. Ignorance in Natural Philosophy was the great and principal Reason. For many Ages after CHRIST, the Ptolemaic was the only prevailing System of the Universe. The Earth was esteemed the Center of it; for whose Sake all the celestial Bodies were made, and moved round it only to administer Heat or Light. This was long taken for granted without Examination. Men easily believed what flattered their Pride, and seemed confirmed by outward Appearance. The Earth appeared greatest to Man; and he was the most considerable upon Earth. And as Ignorance and Vanity conducted him into Errors of Philosophy, so did they into Errors of Faith. And both went

went on increasing by the literal and false Interpretations, which blind Guides put on Scripture. And a furious Zeal (always the Attendant on Ignorance) made it dangerous for Men to declare their Opinions freely either in Philosophy or Religion, for fear of being condemned and murdered as Heretics. Whilst therefore Men were no better informed than to think our Earth the Universe ; they could, as Christians, have no other Notion, than that JESUS was the Saviour of the whole.

2. Since Men have been convinced of the immense Extent of the Universe ; and that every Globe in it is inhabited, many Reasons have kept them silent on this Subject. In Popish Countries, the Fear of a Pope, or an Inquisition, if they should advance any thing, that should be deemed heretical. In Protestant Countries, among the Laity the Fear of being thought singular : among the Clergy, of being thought unorthodox ; which any Opinion may

may be, which either wants or contradicts the Authority (or rather the Non-Authority) of a Father, Synod or Council. Another Reason may be, the Difficulty to make the Vulgar understand it, which they could not without some previous Knowledge of Geography and Astronomy : for want of which they will continue to think this Globe the whole habitable World ; and whilst they do so, it is no Error in them to believe JESUS to be the Saviour of the whole. But Men of Learning and Speculation think not with the Vulgar. GOD has opened wider to them both the Book of Nature and of the Scripture ; and intends they should use the first as a Comment on the other : that, as CHRIST hath brought Life and Immortality to Light through the Gospel, that Light might shine still brighter to illustrate the Truth of the Gospel. In which there are many things, which perhaps were not known to the inspired Writers

Writers themselves, (for they did not speak but as the HOLY GHOST gave them Utterance) the Truth of which will continue gradually to open and disclose itself to Mankind, both in this Life and in the next:

And let no one think it derogatory to the Honour of CHRSIT, to rank him with numberless other Saviours and Mediators, which GOD hath established between himself and the rational Beings which he hath created. With regard to us, JESUS CHRIST, as he is united to the Godhead for our sakes, is a most divine and adorable Person: the Prince and the Hierach of all the Race of ADAM, which have existed, and shall exist till his second coming. He was sent to instruct them by his holy Life and Doctrine, to redeem them by his bitter Death and Passion, and to confirm them by his glorious Resurrection and Ascension: to the end, that if they are holy in this Life, as he was holy, they

they may follow him to that State of Glory to which he is already exalted. For he is the Way to lead MEN into the right Way : the Truth to guide them into all Truth : and the Life to conduct them to everlasting Life. He is the only Mediator between GOD and Man. No Man cometh to the Father but by him. His is the only Name under Heaven, by which MEN can be saved.

The next distinguishing Tenet of the Christian Religion is the Belief of the Resurrection of the Body. 1. That of CHRIST, which has already happened : 2. That of all Mankind, which is to happen at his second coming.

1. The Resurrection of CHRIST is a Matter of Fact, which could be only proved by Evidence. And no Fact was ever more strongly attested. For after his Resurrection, St. PAUL says, he was seen of CEPHAS ; then of the Twelve. After that, he was seen of more than five

hundred Brethren at once : whereof many remain unto the present, and some also are fallen asleep. After that he was seen of JAMES ; then of all the Apostles. And last of all he was seen also of me, as of one born out of due Time.—This certainly is sufficient Evidence to establish the Fact.

2. The Resurrection of CHRIST is a Prelude to that of Mankind, and an Earnest that it will happen at the last Day. He is called the first Fruits of them that slept : and the Beginning and first begotten of the Dead : and we are to resemble him in the Likeness of his Resurrection. How then was CHRIST raised ? and with what Body did he come ? He was raised with the identical Body that was laid in the Grave ; and which did not continue there long enough to see Corruption. This can be the Case of few besides ; only of those few, who shall die just before the last Day. Others too will rise again

again with corruptible Bodies (no matter whether composed of any of the same Particles as before) sufficient to distinguish the Identity of their Persons. To the end, that all Men may be judged in the Flesh on Earth for the Works they had done on Earth in the Flesh. But as St. PAUL says, Flesh and Blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of GOD. Therefore we are not to imagine (nor is it reasonable to imagine) that Men are to pass with the same Bodies into another State. No : St. PAUL says, he will shew a great Mystery : we shall all be changed in a Moment, in the twinkling of an Eye : this Corruptible must put on Incorruption ; this Mortal shall put on Immortality ; and that which was sown a natural Body, shall become a spiritual Body ; as the Body of Christ did before his Ascension, and before he could sit down at the Right-hand of GOD, amongst the holy Angels, who are made subject to him ; and with

whom he will come again in the Clouds with Power and great Glory to judge both the Quick and Dead. At that Day (in the same manner as CHRIST himself ascended into Heaven) St. PAUL says, the Dead in CHRIST shall rise ; and shall be caught up into the Clouds to meet the LORD in the Air.—And why (as the same Apostle says) should it be thought incredible, that GOD should raise the Dead ? It is not incredible, because impossible ; for nothing is so with GOD ; and in this Instance, it requires no greater Power to raise Man's Body, than at first to create it. It is not incredible, because irrational ; for nothing can be more rational, than for GOD to vindicate his Justice on Earth in the Face of all Mankind : that every wrong Sentence given here may here be reversed : that those, who have been unjustly condemned may be acquitted : and those who have been unjustly acquitted may be condemned : that even here the prof-

prosperous wicked Man may begin to suffer, and the afflicted good One to be comforted, before their Punishment or Reward be compleat.

To the Resurrection of the Body is immediately to succeed the Judgment of Mankind, and the End of the World ; that is, of all things on the Face of this Globe. But the End is not yet : the Gospel shall be preached in all the World for a Witness to all Nations, and then shall the End come. But of that Day and Hour knoweth no Man, no, not the Angels in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only. It shall come like a Thief in the Night : and as in the Day of NOAH they knew not, till the Flood came, and took them all away ; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. Be ready therefore, take heed, watch and pray, lest the L ORD coming suddenly shall find you sleeping, or (which is worse) smiting your Fellow-servants, and eating

and drinking with the Drunken.—But tho' we know not in what Hour he will come ; the Manner of his coming is revealed to us, and chiefly by himself.

The Approach of this great Judge will be ushered in with most amazing Pomp and Solemnity. The Sun shall be darkened, the Moon shall not give her Light, the Stars (i. e. Meteors) shall fall from Heaven, and the Powers of the Heavens (i. e. Air) shall be shaken, the Sea and the Waves roaring. And what Wonder ? if then all the Tribes of the Earth mourn ; if Mens Hearts fail them for Fear, and for looking after those things, which are coming on the Earth. For then they shall see the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven with Power and great Glory.

And he shall send his Angels with a great Sound of a Trumpet to summon Mankind. And they shall gather his Elect from the four Winds, and from  
one

one End of Heaven to the other : where we may suppose they have the Liberty to expatriate, and to contemplate GOD's Works, till they are summoned to resume their Bodies to appear at this great Tribunal, in order to receive from their **LORD** more ample Praise and Reward. They will therefore receive this Summons with Joy ! How different from the Guilty ! who (wherever they are) will call on the Mountains to fall on them, and the Waves of the Sea to cover them, from the Fieaceness of his Wrath and the Vengeance of his Power. But in vain ! For every Eye shall see him ; and they also which pierced him ; and all Kindreds of the Earth shall wail because of him. In this manner, those good Men who sleep in JESUS (i. e. shall then be dead) GOD will bring with him ; and when he shall descend from Heaven with a Shout, with the Voice of the Archangels, and with the Truimp of GOD, they shall rise

first : and those other good Men, which are alive and remain unto the coming of the **LORD**, shall not sleep, (i. e. die) but shall appear in the Body with them ; and with them shall meet the **LORD**, and be for ever with him.

This Globe was never so populous, as it will be on that great Day of Assise ; when all the Sons of **ADAM**, who lived in ever so distant Ages, will appear together in the Flesh, and be Cotemporaries. Compared to this, every Assembly of Men recorded in History, appears contemptible ; even the Host of **XERXES** is lost in the Croud. And yet numerous as it will be, every Individual will be strictly examined, and receive the most exact Justice. This will not be like Human Tribunals, where Actions only can be weighed, and Truth may be concealed. Before this Tribunal the Truth must appear : it hath Cognisance of Mens Thoughts as well as Actions : to the Judge

Judge all Hearts are open, all Desires known, and from him no Secrets can be hid.

When the Prince of the Kings of the Earth is thus seated in the Clouds in Power and great Glory to judge the whole Circuit of it ; the Earth revolving on it's Axis shall present every Kingdom, Nation and Language in their turn at the Foot of his Throne, to receive their Trial and their Sentence. Those that lived under the Gospel shall be tried by the Gospel ; those that lived under the Law, by the Law : and those that lived without either Law or Gospel, by (what was a Law to them) such Lights as their Reason afforded ; for GOD is not hard, reaping where he hath not sown, and gathering where he hath not straven. Now shall the Distinction be made between the Seed that fell on good and that which fell on bad Ground : between the Wheat and the Tares : between the wise

wise Virgins with Oyl in their Lamps, and the foolish who had none: between the Servants, who improved their Talents, and those who did not: between those who relieved the Hungry, Thirsty, Stranger, Naked, and Prisoner, and those who did not: between those whom the LORD shall find doing his Will, and those whom he shall find sleeping, smiting their Fellow-servants, or eating and drinking with the Drunken.

The Trial ended, the glorious Judge shall separate Persons so different in Merit, as a Shepherd divideth the Sheep from the Goats: and he shall set the Sheep on his Right-hand, and the Goats on the Left; and then he will pronounce this Sentence. He shall say unto the first, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World. And unto the last he shall say, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil

Devil and his Angels. And these shall go into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life eternal.

But previous to the Execution of the Sentence, both must undergo a very great Change on this Globe, before they quit it for ever. They must both deposite their mortal Bodies in their native Soil, before they step into Eternity. But how extremely different will be their Exit ! This is that important Crisis foretold by JOHN the Baptist, when CHRIST will thoroughly cleanse his Floor ; gather the Wheat into his Garner ; but burn up the Chaff with unquenchable Fire. The Righteous shall be changed in an Instant, in the twinkling of an Eye : they shall leave their mortal, corruptible, and natural, for immortal, incorruptible, and spiritual Bodies : they shall be caught up to meet their LORD in the Air, and be for ever with him : no longer terrestrial, but ethereal Beings ; no longer Men, but Angels ;

Angels; a glorious Society, with CHRIST at their Head: who (as saith the Evangelist) shall shine like the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father. But how dreadful will be the Exit and Catastrophe of the Wicked! Far from quitting the Body with Pleasure, like the Righteous, and ascending with them to meet the LORD, they will be left on Earth to perish as Malefactors in the Flames, which will consume both them and all the Furniture of this Globe, which will be their Funeral Pile. They are the Tares, which at the End of this World, which is the Harvest, the Angels, who are the Reapers, shall gather and burn in the Fire: for the Son of Man shall send forth his Angels, and they shall gather out of his Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do Iniquity, and shall cast them into a Furnace of Fire, there shall be wailing and gnashing of Teeth. In this Day of the LORD, saith St. PETER,

the

the Elements shall melt with Heat, and the Earth, with the Works that are therein, shall be burnt up.

How awfull, how tremendous will be the Scene! when the Ether agitated in the Air, and in the Entrails of the Earth, shall burst forth in Lightnings and Vulcanos, whose Flames seizing on every Combustible shall spread over the Face of the whole Globe. Then shall the Elements melt with fervent Heat: the watry Tribe shall expire in a boiling Ocean; the Aerial in Clouds of Smoke: the Cave or Forest shall be no Refuge to the wild Beasts; nor House, nor City to offending Man: both shall perish with their Habitations. All the Works of Nature and of Art will be involved in one common Ruin. Where is the proud Pyramid, whose wide Foundation was thought solid as the Earth, and whose Point invaded the Skies? where the Triumphal Arch? the aspiring Column and Obelisk?

Obelisk ? the *Cloud-capt Tower* ? the *Ge-geous Palace* ? the *Solemn Temple* ? Every Monument of Man's Vanity, Pride and Ambition, of his Superstition, and even of his Piety, shall fail ; and their Place shall no where be found. All Records of History shall cease : the Glory of the greatest Empires shall vanish : and it shall no longer be known on Earth, that there were such Men as ALEXANDER and CÆSAR, or such Cities as Babylon and Rome. Fame shall die ; and Oblivion reign in her Stead. On this solemn and final Day, the great wicked Man will have before his Eyes these Monuments of his Pride ; and when he is perishing with them will blush to think, that he set his Affections on things so trifling and transitory : he will wish his Name had been unknown : and when his Memory ceases on Earth, that it might cease too in his own Conscience.

When

When Man has finally quitted this Globe, the future State and Condition of it is not the Concern of Man. Whether GOD in his Wisdom may suffer it to lie fallow for a Season; or after thus fertilizing it with the Flames, will immediately replenish the Face of it. It is of much more Importance to consider the future State and Condition of Man; When the Wicked shall go into everlasting Punishment, and the Righteous into Life eternal.

i. As to the Wicked. After their Bodies are consumed in the general Conflagration, their Souls will mix with other Evil Spirits. From Men they will become Devils: be associated with the Devil and his Angels: and be cast into the everlasting Fire prepared for them: where the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched. This Worm and Fire are metaphorical, not material. A material Worm could not live in a material Fire:

A material Fire could not affect an immaterial Substance like the Soul ; which escaped from such a Fire, when the Body was consumed at the general Conflagration. The Worm that never dies is Conscience. The Fire (i. e. Torment) which is never quenched (i. e. never ceases) are uneasy Passions and Affections, Thoughts, and Reflections, Ideas and Imaginations : All which attended with Anxiety, Anguish, Terror, Horror, Remorse, and Despair, compose a Hell in the Soul of a wicked Man. The Soul is not so properly speaking in Hell, as Hell in the Soul. Wherever the Spirit of a wicked Man shall be, there will be Hell : whether it please GOD to confine it to any one particular Part of Space, or suffer it to wander through every Part of it. It carries Hell with it : and it is with Justice MILTON makes Satan say, that he himself is Hell ; and that he can fly from Hell no more than from himself. Divines have vainly

vainly disputed about the Place of Hell, as if it were necessarily Local. Poets have described it as such, in the finest Allegories, and the most beautiful Colours of Imagination: and have divided it into several Apartments for the different Degrees of Guilt. But such Lodgings are unnecessary: each guilty Person carries about him a Hell, and a Punishment exactly proportioned to his Crime: for it would be inconsistent with the Justice of GOD to punish all Crimes alike. It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, than for Jerusalem: for the Offenders against Man, than for the Atheist, Idolater, and Blasphemer, who have directly affronted GOD: for petty Trespassers against their Neighbours, than for the Tyrant, Murderer, and Adulterer: for those who have neglected their Duty, than those who have wilfully transgressed it: for those who had some mixture of Good with their Evil, than those who

have none : for certainly the least vicious Man and the least virtuous, will not be very distant in Condition : nor the Gates of Heaven and Hell so remote, as is commonly imagined. One sort of Punishment will be common to all the Wicked, viz. to see the Righteous in ABRAHAM's Bosom, in a State of Bliss, to which they cannot arrive : to deplore the loss of that Bliss by an ill-spent Life : to wish they had never been ; or might cease to be, if they may not be released from that Place of Torment. But whether they ever will be, GOD only knows. If after Ages of Torment, of his infinite Mercy he should release them ; we can scarce imagine they would be immediately advanced to a happy State : the best to be expected would be a new State of Probation.

2. Let us now change the Scene to Heaven ; that Region of the Blessed ; where are Joys for evermore ; such as

Eye

Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive. This happy Region is confined to no particular Place ; it extends to all Nature. The Spirits of Men are finite, and consequently must be in some particular Part of Space. They must be somewhere, but may be anywhere : and as the Spirit of a righteous Man must be happy in all Places ; therefore wherever it goes, Heaven attends him. Wherever GOD pleases at any time more particularly to manifest his Glories or his Terrors, those Places during that time are more peculiarly Heaven or Hell, which he can change and remove at Pleasure. We are sure, that our Heaven will be with CHRIST. He is at the Right Hand of GOD, that is, in great Glory. We shall follow where he is gone before ; to those Mansions which he is preparing for us. For in his Father's House are many Mansions, that is, different degrees

of Reward : for GOD, who weighs the minutest Actions, will reward every Man according to his Works. It is not every one shall sit on Thrones like the Apostles, judging the twelve Tribes of Israel : or be ranked with the goodly Fellowship of the Apostles, or the noble Army of Martyrs. Many shall be admitted within the Suburbs of the New Jerusalem, who shall not approach him, who sitteth on the Throne : but when the four and twenty Elders fall down to worship him and the Lamb, the whole Circuit of Men and Angels, after their Example, shall fall prostrate in Adoration. This is that Heaven of Heavens, which CHRIST himself revealed to his beloved Disciple in Patmos, in Types and Figures, to give Mankind some previous Idea of the very glorious State, to which the Righteous should be exalted. And when they shall at any time remove to a greater Distance from the Throne of his Glory ; and

and go as his Ambassadors to the different Quarters of Nature, they will not want their Heaven. They will find it every where in a Soul, purged from impure Passions and Affections, which they found so difficult to restrain here below. They will find it in the Reflection on a Life well spent, which was a Comfort to them whilst they only expected a State of Happiness, and must be infinitely greater when they enjoy it. They will find it also in the Enlargement of their Powers and Capacities, which will make ample Amends for their Weakness and Defects in this Life.

Those Spirits clad in glorified Bodies of an Etherial Substance will pass with ease through the Etherial Spaces : quick as the same Ether darts in the Lightnings ; or passes to the Planets from the Sun. They may then visit in Person those Parts of Nature, which they could only reach here in Imagination. Their former Thirst

after Knowledge will be satisfied : their Curiosity gratified : their Doubts cleared up : their Errors detected : the Relation, Dependence, Connection, and Harmony of things will be discovered ; as well as the Means and Manner of their Operation : Causes, as well as Effects, will appear : and it will be known, in what Cases GOD (the first Cause) acts immediately ; and in what he uses other Beings as the Instruments of his Operations. They will then be acquainted with the Nature of Place, of Space, and Infinity : of Time, Duration, and Eternity : of Spirit, and its Union with, and the Means and Manner of its Operation on Matter : of Matter, and its Elements, which compose all Bodies : of all Bodies, their Structure, Magnitude, Forms, and Motion : of Comets (which perhaps may pass into different neighbouring Systems) : of those Suns, which each illuminates its Planetary System : of the Planets in each

each System : and of the Furniture and Inhabitants of each Planet : and after admiring the Wisdom of GOD in the wonderful Structure of the Universe, they will join the great Chorus of Heaven in saying : " Thou art worthy, O LORD, " to receive Glory and Honour and " Power ; for thou hast created all things, " and for thy Pleasure they are and were " created."

Such may and probably will be a Part of the glorious State of those, who adhere to the Precepts and follow the Example of CHRIST. But how fatally have Mankind deviated from both ! He very truly foretold, that he hath not sent Peace but a Sword. The best Religion hath been perverted to the worst Purposes. It hath been used as an Engine of Slavery instead of Freedom ; and of the Destruction instead of the Salvation of Mankind.

As AARON set up the Golden Calf in the Wilderness : the Christian High Priests have set up many of their own Inventions as the Objects of Veneration : and required many things to be observed not required by Scripture. They have established the Opinions of weak, wicked, ambitious, fallible, Men, as the Doctrines of CHRIST. Have imposed foolish, absurd, ridiculous, superstitious, idolatrous Ceremonies, as necessary. All from Motives of Ignorance, Ambition, or Interest ; with a Cruelty and Zeal inconsistent with Christianity or Humanity. True Christianity almost ceased in each Country, as soon as the Government became Christian. And as before that time, true Christians suffered Persecution, as their LORD and MASTER did ; after that time, the false ones deserting his Precepts and Example turned Persecutors themselves. What Disputes, what Quarrels, what Murders, what Massacres,

sacres, have been caused among Christians on frivolous Questions, that not only a Man of Sense, but even a Child would be ashamed of! and prosecuted with Zeal, as if essential to Salvation ! and out of the same Zeal often impiously declared to be so ! and the greatest Sinners have been esteemed Saints for espousing them ! There is scarce a Tenet, or scarce an external Ceremony of Christianity, but hath been the Subject of some Dispute.

I have before observed ; there are but two Performances, in their own Nature indifferent, required by CHRIST of his Followers, as outward and visible Marks of their Profession, viz. Baptism and his Supper. Very easy Performances ! and yet they have afforded matter of much Dispute. It hath been disputed, whether Baptism may be administered by Women as well as Men : by Laymen as well as Clergy : to Children as well as adult : by Aspersion or Immersion : in public or private :

private : in a House, a Church, or a River. Whether valid, if any of the Ceremonies are wanting in the Performance : and whether fatal if the whole is omitted ; even to Infants who could not help it. Strange Disputations ! Do the Disputants imagine Baptism a physical Means of conveying Grace and Salvation ? and that they flow, as by a Canal, through the Water and Fingers of those who administer it ? If they do ; they are as bad Philosophers as Divines. If they consider it (as they ought to do) only as a Condition to entitle us to GOD's Favour ; do they think GOD unjust, to require the Performance of it by Infants and others not able to perform it ? or to punish them for the Omission ? Or if Baptism is performed ; do not they think (as they ought) that GOD accepts the Will for the Deed ? Or do they think, that he, like vain Man, is pleased with a Ceremonial ? or angry, if any Circumstance of it is omitted ?

And

And are they presumptuous enough from thence to determine the future State of Man, and the Purpose of GOD?

There have been as many frivolous Disputes about the LORD's Supper. As, where the Table should be placed: whether it should be called literally a Table, or figuratively an Altar: whether it should be received fitting or kneeling; whether in leavened or unleavened Bread: whether in Wine, or Wine mixed with Water: whether in one or both Kinds: or whether alike by Clergy and Laity: and by whom or to whom it may be administered. Can any Man refuse to administer it to another on pretence of Unworthiness, without arrogating to himself the Prerogative of GOD, of knowing the Heart? Or can any one, to whom it is refused, be weak enough to be uneasy from the Apprehension of any ill Consequence to result from the Refusal? Does he not know that GOD accepts the Will  
for

for the Deed ? that he punishes only for voluntary, not forced Omission ; for the Man's own Fault, and not that of another ? Human Excommunications are but airy Phantoms in their Nature ; tho' they have been found useful Engines of worldly Power and Interest. And when exerted in ignorant Times, have had Influence enough on weak and prejudiced Minds, to produce the most horrid Riots, Murders, Seditions, Rebellions, and Calamities. The same may be said of the Doctrine of Transubstantiation : absurd and blasphemous : which wants no Confutation ; and deserves only Contempt. And the Belief of it so long amongst such Numbers is an Infatuation to be regarded as an Instance of GOD's immediate Vengeance for the Abuse of his Religion ; and is a Proof, that any Absurdity may be inculcated into the Mind of Man ; and that the Prejudice of Education can triumph

triumph over the united Force both of his Senses and his Reason.

CHRIST prescribed no particular Forms of Public Worship or of Government in his Church : but left both (as the Forms of Civil Government are left) to the Choice of every Society. It is sufficient, that things are done decently and in Order: for as Ceremonies are not essential, the same Ceremony is not necessary. There must be some. Men cannot assemble to serve GOD, without some Time or Place appointed for their Meeting : without observing some Form, when met : and without having some Persons among them to officiate.

i. As to the Place. GOD is equally present in all Places ; and CHRIST and his Apostles preached and prayed in all alike. The Primitive Christians were under Persecution ; and could have none set apart by the State. When the Emperors became Christian, Heathen Temples

ple were converted to Churches, and false Gods gave way to the true. It was not long, before Idols were replaced in Churches, by those who called themselves Christians ; nay, in some perhaps the very same Idol which had been removed from thence was restored to the same Place : and was to represent some Saint, often a worse Person than the God, whom he supplanted, and whose Worship he usurped : for in the Heathen World Men were raised to divine Honours for signal Services to Mankind ; which are not always the Terms of Canonization. Thus the same Places were restored to Idolatry, which had before been rescued from it. And as Saints (like the Heathen Gods) were Men, and could not be present every where ; the People were taught to believe them more peculiarly present where their Image was. That was the Place of Miracles : the Statue was often animated : it rolled the Eye :

Eye : it nodded : it spoke : it told Fortunes : it took particular Men or Professions under its Protection : it had Relicks and Nostrums to cure particular Diseases both of Body and Mind. This drew together great Numbers of People ; which brought no small Gain to the Priesthood, and to the Place ; which made both cry out, like those of Ephesus, “ Great is DIANA of the Ephesians.”—The Opinion of a local Presence of Heathen Gods in Temples, and of Romish Saints in Churches, made way for a false Belief, that GOD himself was more peculiarly present there : that the Place acquired (I know not what) Holiness by the Ceremony of Consecration : that before it, it was no Church ; and that after it, it ought never to be turned to any other use.—But GOD dwells not in Temples made with Hands. He is Omnipresent : and tho’ for great Purposes he hath sometimes manifested his Presence by outward

outward Signs in particular Places ; yet he was not then more present in those Places than in others ; nor have they acquired since any particular Sanctity. He manifested himself by Fire to MOSES, when he sent him to deliver his People : to that People he manifested himself by Thunder and Lightning and a Voice, at the Delivery of the Law : in a Cloud by Day, and a Pillar of Fire by Night, over the Tabernacle in the Wilderness : by Fire on the Altar on the Dedication of SOLOMON's Temple : by cloven Tongues to the Apostles on sending the HOLY GHOST. But the particular Spots of Earth on which all those great Events happened are now unknown or disregarded. And it is absurd to imagine, that when such Acts of the Deity gave no particular Sanctity to a Place, that any Act of Man can do it. An Edifice, or the Ground on which it stands, is not capable of such an Impression : the Heart of Man

only

only is. Where two or three are gathered together in GOD's Name, there is a Congregation; and where a Congregation is, there is the Church. The Walls are not a Church: nor can any particular Place be always appropriated and secured to the same Use. Conveniency may alter it: Time certainly will. Consecration of a Church therefore, in the most rational Sense, is only a Publication, that that Place is designed for the People to meet in to serve GOD; with a Prayer, that they may serve him there in Spirit, and in Truth. It was this imaginary Sanctity of Place, that formerly sent the Princes of Christendom on Expeditions to Palestine, which cost Millions of Money, and of Lives: and that hath since sent immense Treasure in Presents to LORETTO; of no use to the Lady there; and which, we may believe Popes have been too wise to suffer to remain there useless.

2. As to the Time. It is necessary to have stated Times as well as Places of public Worship : that Congregations may know when as well as where to meet. The Christians, in imitation of the Jews, and in compliance with the fourth Commandment, have rationally set apart one Day in seven for that purpose. But they changed it from the seventh, established by MOSES to remind Man of his Creation, to the first of the Week, on which CHRIST rose from the Dead, to remind him of that great Proof of his Redemption. And to imprint so memorable an Event still stronger on Mens Minds, the Resurrection of CHRIST is celebrated once a Year with more Solemnity, as his Birth, Passion, and Ascension likewise are. These Things are very rational to be done ; but may be ordered to be performed as well at one Season as another, and nothing could be weaker than the Ancient and Unchristian Dispute about  
the

the Time of the Celebration of Easter; and the endeavouring to fix an invariable universal Rule for it. It is impossible in Nature. Nature hath not divided the Earth's annual Course precisely into Days, but hath left a Fraction; which (as is well known) in process of Time varied the Rule from the original Intention. Nature hath also distributed the same Point of Time into different Seasons on different Parts of the Globe. Men cannot celebrate Easter all together at the same Point of Time: they must vary either in the Day or the Season of the Year. When it is Day in our Hemisphere, it is Night in the other: and half Mankind will be in Bed whilst others are at Church. Whilst it is Spring in one Hemisphere it is Autumn in the other. Therefore if they keep Easter at the same Time, it will be at different Seasons of the Year; if at the same Season of the Year, it must be at different and

opposite Times. And what Rule must be observed within the Polar Circles? where Days are reckoned by Months, and not Months by Weeks and Days: they certainly cannot celebrate Easter there the first Sunday after the full Moon after the 21st of March. It is amazing to reflect on the Zeal shewn formerly on this Occasion; and that Men could be induced to think, that GOD would not accept their reasonable Service, as well at one Season of the Year as another, and at all Times alike. But it was lucky, that whilst they were labouring to fix a Point of no Importance in Divinity, they improved themselves in Astronomy and Chronology.—Not content with setting apart those Days in Commemoration of CHRIST, Christians soon appointed others in Memory of his Disciples. This might be reasonable, to remind them of the Lives and Examples of those holy and inspired Persons. But the Popes did not

stop

stop here: they took upon them the Pre-rogative of GOD in judging Man's Heart, and declaring Saints whom soever they pleased. Every Zealot for their usurped Power was canonized, tho' the meanest or most wicked of Men. The Calendar was not able to contain them. Every Day had more than one. A Man, who observed those Days, could not carry on the necessary Business of Life; but was rendered an useless Member of Society. And how are these Days celebrated? A Holiday is not a holy Day, but a Day of Debauchery; not of Religion, but of Vice: so that one nominal Saint makes thousands of real Sinners.

3. As to the Form. When Men are met at a certain Time and Place for public Worship, they must necessarily use some Form of Words, and of Ceremonies in performing it. What these Forms should be is not directed in Scripture. It is impossible it should, since Modes of

Speech and Behaviour are very different in different Places, and ever varying with Time in the same Place. It is sufficient if the Words are intelligible, and the Sense agreeable to Reason and Scripture : and if the outward Gesture and Behaviour be such, as by the Fashion of the Place denote Decency and Respect. Under these Qualifications every People is at liberty to chuse their own Form ; and every Government, for the Sake of Order, ought to establish some Form for their Use. This every Government ought to propose, no Government ought to impose ; but should leave to every Man the Christian Liberty of worshipping GOD in any other Way he likes better, provided he disturbs not the Peace of the Society. Forms and Ceremonies, being in their own Nature indifferent, are only the Dress of Religion, the Mode of which every Government may both establish and alter at Pleasure. The most rational

Forms

Forms are those which have the fewest Ceremonies; as they are the least burthensome, and are most agreeable to that Liberty and Simplicity which CHRIST intended to establish. It is wise in a Government to establish such a Form of Worship as is agreeable to the Inclinations of the Majority; and not to alter it without their Consent. It is weak in Individuals not to comply with the Form of the Country where they happen to reside, if it requires nothing which they think sinful. Could one have imagined, that Men could have been so far infatuated, as to regard these Forms as essential? but so they have been generally taught, and so they believe. Nay, they generally believe them to be most essential. Mention the Word RELIGION, the first Idea that arises in their Minds is concerning these Forms. By the Religion of England, Scotland, Sweden, France, Geneva, Rome, &c. they mean the par-

ticular Forms established by Law in each. Thus the Word RELIGION is perverted, and instead of being applied to the Belief and Practice of the Gospel in general, in which it consists, is only applied to the particular Modes of public Worship in each Country, which are in themselves indifferent. Nay, so zealous have Men been for these last, that, in Support of their own Modes they have violated not only all Principles of good Policy, but even of Christianity and Humanity. But by this blind Zeal they have seldom gained their End, which is better and more certainly obtained by Indulgence; for if Men are left to themselves, they will naturally fall into the Fashion. None of these outward Forms will either make or unmake a Christian. The only true Christian is he, who with a benevolent Temper, and sincere Disposition, conforms himself to the best of his Understanding

standing to the moral and general Rules of the Gospel.

4. As to the Persons to officiate. When Christians are met at particular Times and Places to perform their public Worship, whatever the Form is, the Act to be performed must be either Prayer, Praise or Thanksgiving to GOD, administering CHRIST's Sacraments, or hearing the Scriptures read or explained. In the Performance of these Acts, it is very convenient, for the Sake of Order, that there should be particular Persons appointed to lead the Way in them, and to be the Instruments of conveying Instruction to the Ears and Hearts of the Congregation. If it was not so, all might be silent, and neither Speakers nor Hearers: or else all might be Speakers and no Hearers. Therefore from the Time of CHRIST, to the present, particular Persons have been constantly appointed for those Functions. CHRIST first instructed

ed and sent forth his Disciples, and they others. And at first it could not be otherwise; for then there were no others that knew the Will of their Master. But after the Publication of the Gospel, when the Scriptures were in every Hand, all Persons of equal Capacity were equally able to instruct both themselves and others; and there was no Necessity immutably to appropriate the Performance of these Acts to particular Individuals, which all Christians were equally able to perform. Nor is there any Command or Injunction in Scripture for such a personal Distinction amongst them. But what was at first necessary was afterwards thought convenient; and a particular Set of Men have ever since been appointed to these Functions. Before Governments became Christian, these Men could not be appointed by the State; but must have been appointed by one another; either by Election of their respective

tive Congregations, or by Nomination of the Persons before appointed, or by both these Ways concurring and confirming each other. But such Appointment could give no Authority to one Christian over another. All that they could do was, to exhort others to follow their Directions, and to exclude them from their Society, if they did not, Temporal Power they had none, nor could have, either from CHRIST, or from the State ; the first had disclaimed it, declaring his Kingdom not of this World ; and no Government was yet Christian. And therefore whatever temporal Power the Clergy have at any time possessed in any Country, they must have acquired it, either by Grant from the State, or by Usurpation ; the Pretence of a Divine Right to Power or Possessions being as scandalous as groundless.

When Princes became Converts, they were zealous for their new Faith, and  
liberal

liberal to their Instructors. They gave them earthly for their heavenly things ; and those Instructors were glad of the Exchange. But after tasting the Sweets of Wealth and Power, they were unwilling to hold them upon so precarious a Tenure as the Pleasure of the State. What they at first received as a Favour, they soon insisted upon as a Right ; and founded that Right on their own arbitrary Interpretation of Scripture ; which they made a Warrant for whatever they listed ; and made Excommunication, (which they endeavoured to persuade the World was always followed by Damnation) as the Penalty for every Non-compliance. Credulous Men were easily imposed upon, and terrified with big Words. The Clergy gained an Ascendant over Mens Consciences ; and by that a temporal Power too strong for the State. Princes were often forced to be Slaves to their own Subjects ; who pretended to derive

derive a Power from Scripture, independent of theirs, and superior to it.

When Governments declared for Christianity, the same Persons continued to officiate, and the same Orders of Men remained among them as before. In the Exercise of their Functions, they were confined to particular Districts; but the Persons who were to exercise them were appointed (or ordained) by one another, as before. This, as I said before, was not necessary, nor commanded in Scripture; but might be thought convenient: nor was it easy to foresee all the Consequences, which have since proved so inconvenient to the State. It was a Mark of Distinction, which afforded them an opportunity of setting themselves up as a Body of Men of a different Species from other Christians, and of assuming an Authority and Jurisdiction over them. As Ministers had been so appointed from the Times of the Apostles, it was more  
easy

easy to persuade the World, that they must always be so appointed, and could not be otherwise. That the Persons so appointed, and no other (even though elected by their Congregation, or nominated by the State) had a right to exercise those Functions. That it was a Divine Right, which they alone derived to themselves in Succession from CHRIST and his Disciples; and which they alone could transmit in Succession to Men of the same Order. That such Orders of Men had a Divine Right to Power, and were essentially necessary to the very Being of a Church: and that one Link broke in the Chain of their Succession might endanger the future State of Mankind. Thus they established themselves into a Corporation, distinguished from the rest of their Fellow Subjects, by the most extensive and exclusive Powers and Jurisdictions: yet it is difficult to produce Passages from Scripture amounting to a Grant of a perpetual,

petual, personal, successive, and exclusive Charter.

Being in possession of appointing one another, and of performing particular Acts, they made it a Pretence to assume the magnificent Titles of Ambassadors of CHRIST and Successors of the Apostles; and as such to claim a Power, Authority, and Respect, answerable to those Titles.

They were not like the Ambassadors of an earthly Prince; but their Character was indelible, and their Power was inseparable from it. Their Persons sacred and inviolable: not amenable to civil Courts, but to be judged by themselves alone. Their Possessions holy and unalienable; and held by a Divine Tenure; for being holy themselves, every thing they laid Hands on become so. When they appointed others to the Ministry by Imposition of Hands, they talked of it in a Stile, as if the Spirit or Grace of

GOD

GOD was not his immediate Gift, but was capable of a material Conveyance to the Soul; and that they were the Physical Instruments and sole Canals by which it could pass to Persons ordained, and from them to the rest of Mankind: and as if the bare Ceremony of Ordination gave a Man a respectable Character, which is to be acquired only by an orderly Life.

As Successors of the Apostles, they laid no Claim to succeed them in their Labours, their Virtues, and their Sufferings; but in Power and Authority, which the Apostles themselves never claimed.

The Apostles had a Power of casting out Devils, and of working other Miracles. This Power was Personal; but yet it hath been often claimed by these pretended Successors, to strike Mankind with Awe and Veneration. In dark and ignorant Ages they imposed numberless Forgeries upon them; which being discovered

covered in more enlightened Times, have not only brought the Contrivers to Shame and Contempt; but made Men doubt of the Truth of Christianity itself, when they found such base Artifices used to support it.

The Apostles did not desire to be distinguished from the other Followers of their Master; claimed no peculiar Privileges, or any Superiority over them; humbling, not exalting themselves; and complying with others, not exacting Obedience from them. They pretended to no Sacredness of Person; or that the Divine Grace should be conveyed from them in Succession by a particular Set of Men exclusive of other Christians; and if such Succession should be interrupted, many Acts could not be performed that are necessary to Salvation. These were the Pretences of more modern Divines, to make themselves necessary and respected.

Neither the Apostles or their Master left Directions in what manner the Church was for ever to be governed : much less did they say, that Episcopacy, Presbytery, or any other Form, was of Divine Right. They left the particular Form of the Government of each Church to the Society or State to which it belonged: no more requiring a Uniformity in that, than in the civil Government of States. As Civil Governments all differ according to Time, Place, and Occasion ; so must Ecclesiastical : and as the first agree in some fundamental Principles ; so must the last : the chief of which is, that CHRIST was a Prophet sent by GOD to instruct Mankind ; and that he died and rose again to confirm the Truth of his Doctrine.

The Apostles claimed no worldly Possessions, much less a Divine Right to Tythes. They claimed no worldly Power, much less a Right to dispose of Kingdoms.

doms. They arrogated not to themselves the Prerogative of GOD, either of judging of Mens Hearts, by canonizing them for Saints, or by anathematizing them for Sinners; or of forgiving Sinners by Pardons and Indulgences. Could they have imagined, that their pretended Successors would blasphemously apply these blasphemous Claims to sanctify some for promoting, and to curse others for opposing their Designs? That from being the Ministers of GOD's Word, they should claim to be the Sole Interpreters of it, and make it speak their own Language to gain Obedience to themselves? Or that from being Ministers of his Sacraments, they should take possession of the Gates of Heaven and of Hell, by persuading Men that the receiving them from their Hands was necessary to Salvation; and by giving or refusing them to what Persons they pleased? Excommunication formerly carried a Terror that few could

withstand, looking on it as a certain Earnest and Prelude of Damnation : and it was the most powerful Engine in the Hands of the Clergy to bring about all their Purposes ; by this they were able to triumph over Rivals, to destroy Heretics, and dethrone Princes. Are we to lament, that it has now lost its Force ?

The Apostles did all in their Power to make known the Will of their Master : they taught all Nations ; and preached and published the Gospel to every Creature. Their pretended Successors have endeavoured to keep it to themselves ; to conceal it in a Language unknown ; and deliver out to the Vulgar such Parts only as they judge proper, in their own Sense and Interpretation.

Is it known, or is it probable, that the Apostles ever composed a Creed, although there is one, which goes under their Name ? They certainly did not compose it in the precise Terms in which we now have

have it. Or if those inspired Persons did compose it, is it not sufficient ? Or shall any Mortal presume to compose, and (what is still more) to impose another after it ? Yet their pretended Successors have composed many : and the more they have composed, the more they have confounded and divided Mankind. Were they to publish many more, they might make most Points of Christianity incredible. A Man scarce deserves the Name of a Christian, that could entirely believe all those already extant.

The Apostles were contented with the Scriptures in the Form and Words, in which they received them from their Master and the Holy Spirit : they attempted not to impose their own Opinions on the World ; much less to establish them as Articles of Faith. Their pretended Successors have been of a more dictating and dogmatical Spirit. They have called themselves the Church, and

under that Title claimed a Right to determine every Doctrine. Some things they have decided, which CHRIST never taught ; some which he left undecided and free to every Man's Opinion ; some impossible to be known ; some too frivolous or even ridiculous to be examined ; and some not things in Nature but only their own Chimeras. To these Decisions they have required an implicit Faith, and a Submission without Reserve ; insisting that others should declare an unfeigned Assent to them, or openly subscribe them : endeavouring to terrify such as refused with opprobrious Names, Curses, and Excommunications ; and (what is worse) pursuing them with Banishment, Fine, Imprisonment, Fire and Faggot ; and acting as Substitutes of Satan in torturing Mankind.

Those Things which CHRIST left mysterious, his Apostles attempted not

to

to explain, patiently waiting for a more full Revelation of them in a future State. Their pretended Successors, more positive and presumptuous, have magisterially explained them all. The Divine Essence is incomprehensible to weak and mortal Man : yet they have undertaken to demonstrate, how the three Persons of the Trinity exist in it ; and have wrangled, and in turns have persecuted each other for many Centuries about it. Witness <sup>a</sup>SABELLIUS, who denied the Existence of the SON and HOLY GHOST, asserting them to be only Qualities of the Godhead : and <sup>b</sup>MACEDONIUS, who denied the Divinity of the HOLY GHOST only. Witness <sup>c</sup>ARIUS, who denied the Eternity of the SON ; and SOCINUS, who denied his Divinity. The same may be said of their endeavouring to explain the Manner of

<sup>a</sup> Vid. BOWER's Hist. of the Popes, Vol. I. p. 75.

<sup>b</sup> Ibid. p. 172.

<sup>c</sup> Ibid. from p. 158. to 167.

CHRIST's Union to the Godhead. <sup>a</sup> NE-STORIUS and his Followers maintaining two Persons and two Natures in CHRIST ; and <sup>c</sup> EUTYCHES and his only one Person and one Nature. They murdered each other in Defence of these Opinions : and the Followers of ATHANASIUS, endeavouring to set them right, have damned all Mankind, who do not come into theirs. Some have doubted whether our Saviour had a human Soul ; and others whether he had a Body. And others have disputed where his Soul was between his Death and Resurrection ; and where his Body is since his Ascension. Vain Enquiries, and of no Importance !

Those pretended Successors of the Apostles, not content with explaining Mysteries, have made Mysteries of Things very plain. The Sacraments, the Conditions of GOD's Grace, they represented

<sup>a</sup> Ibid. from p. 386. to 405.

<sup>c</sup> Vol. II. from p. 30. to 64.—Vid. p. 306, 339.

as the physical Means of conveying it; and that they could be effectually administer'd only by themselves; and not even by themselves if not orthodox. Many have been so absurd, as to make Metaphor a Reality; and to maintain, that when CHRIST called Bread his Body, he turned it into Flesh: as every Roman Catholic Priest has done since: so that when the consecrated Wafer is taken into the Mouth, if their Interpretation be true, the Congregation are Canibals.

How many Conceits have they entertained concerning the State of Man, both at his Creation, and after his Death! The Account which MOSES gives of his Creation, and adapted to vulgar Capacities, and the allegorical Account which he gives of his Fall, they have taken in a literal Sense; which hath led them into a Labyrinth of ridiculous Absurdities: which I before hinted, and which have been sufficiently exposed

exposed by Men of great <sup>f</sup> Learning and Abilities.

Having thus introduced Man upon the Stage, let us hear how they have disposed of him upon his Exit. His Soul is no sooner separated from his Body, but some have sent it to Hades, some to Purgatory, and some made it sleep till the Resurrection. At the Resurrection, they have given him the same individual Particles, which composed his Body before, (as if necessary to his Identity) without saying in what Period of his Life: and have had so gross an Imagination as to think, that the same Body is to pass with him to Heaven; which we are told Flesh and Blood cannot inherit. After the Resurrection some have given a Reign of a thousand Years on Earth to the Righteous; and others, more kind, sent them directly to Heaven. Vain Speculations!

<sup>f</sup> See BURNET's *Archæologiæ Philosophicæ*, Lib. 2.  
c. 7. &c.

Is it not sufficient for Man to know, that he will be miserable, if bad ; and happy beyond Expression, if righteous. The particular Description of a Country cannot be had, from which *no Traveller returns.*

Yet these Men have rushed boldly into Heaven and Hell ; and, like Poets, described the Torments of the one, and Joys of the other ; tho' the Scriptures say, these last are such, as neither Eye hath seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive. They have been pleased even to fix the Scene, and tell you where Hell is ; tho' they do not all agree in what Latitude it lies. Some imagining you must descend to it, and that it is a Dark, Covered Place, are pleased to fix it near the Center of our Globe ; which is the lowest Place, in the Conception of us poor Mortals, who creep on the Surface of it. Others conceiving it to be a very hot Place,

Place, have been pleased to fix it in the Sun, where poor Souls will be burnt: and others in a Comet, where they will be severely scorched as they pass by the Sun. It is more difficult for them to find out the Heaven, to which we are to ascend: for, as in our Notion we ascend, when we remove from any Part of our Globe, our Globe being the Standard or Point from which we set out on our Journey, the Roads may branch out from thence to any Part of the Universe:

Not satisfied with describing Hell, and the Torments of the Damned, they have entered into the Counsels of the Almighty; and blasphemously assumed to themselves a Right of judging of the Justice of his Determinations. God, say they, fore-saw all Mens Actions, and that some would sin: they therefore can scarce reconcile it to his Mercy, if from Eternity he destined some to be Vessels of his Wrath; or even gave them a Capacity  
of

of finning, foreseeing they would sin; tho' he gave them a Will free to determine their Actions, and a Power to act according to that Determination. If GOD, say they, is not the Cause of Sin in Man, he placed him amidst Temptations, which are the Occasion of it: and therefore they think the Scripture not well understood, when it mentions everlasting Punishment; too great, they think, to be inflicted by a merciful and just GOD, on a Creature whom he made so frail, and for Crimes committed in a momentary Life. Thus, like the Devils in our great Poet,

" They reason high  
Of Providence, Foreknowledge, Will and Fate,  
Fixt Fate, Free Will, Foreknowledge absolute,  
And find no End in wandring Mazes lost.  
Vain Wisdom all, and false Philosophy !

— MILTON, Book II.

It

It was not given to Man to know these things in this Life ; and therefore he should not disquiet himself in vain about them. Shall an Animal of so limited an Understanding, creeping on the Surface of this little Globe, having only a few Objects within the Reach of his Senses, little acquainted with their Nature, and as little with the Connection and Dependence of one Being on another, set himself up as Dictator of the Universe ? He cannot know the Schemes of Providence, much less alter them. God made Man, and not he himself. He created him for his Pleasure, and at his Pleasure he will dispose of him. He alone knows through what new Scenes he must pass ; and he will conduct him through them to answer the Ends of his Providence. Let Man resign himself in full Confidence on that Sovereign Being, who is just and merciful to all his Creatures ;

tures; and daily say, "Not my will  
"but thine be done."

But tho' these Points cannot be known yet they are important: and therefore Disputes about them, tho' vain, are not so ridiculous, as those, which have been raised by the Clergy about meer Ceremonies and Trifles of their own Invention. I have mentioned some concerning Times and Places and Forms of Worship, and of administering the Sacraments; concerning Ordination, different Orders or Degrees of Clergy, Ecclesiastical Government, and Censures. Who can forbear laughing to hear of Disputes about a Cloak or a Surplice; about placing a Table or a Pulpit; about sitting or kneeling; about turning to the East or West; bowing or other Gestures; fasting or feasting; eating Fish or Flesh; in Lent or out of it; and those numberless Rites, which Papists retain? many of which the Protestants rejected by Authority at the

the Reformation ; and many of which by their own Reason they do since reject.

Such Disputes would have been thought incredible ; because they concern things not enjoined in Scripture, and are inconsistent with the Spirit of it : if they stood not recorded in Ecclesiastical History. Ecclesiastical History ! the most insignificant, least entertaining, and least instructive, of all Histories ! A Narration either of most impertinent Trifles, or else of most shocking Crimes ! A Collection of the Ignorance, Folly, Credulity and Superstition of weak Men ; of the Knavery, Forgery, and Imposition, of the Pride, Avarice, and Ambition, of the Tyranny, Persecution, and Cruelty, of worldly Men ! and the greatest Reproach to Christianity ! If there are many Martyrs, whose Memory is ever to be honoured ; there are more Monsters, whose Memory is ever to be detested : who have perverted the best things into the worst ;

worst; and under the Name of CHRIST's Religion have established that of Anti-christ.

Such Disputes are at present little regarded in this Island: and may they never return again to disturb the Quiet of it! The best way to prevent it is for the Clergy not to endeavour to impose their own Authority on Mankind; but to leave the Gospel (as it is and ought to be) the sole Standard of Faith and Practice: to deliver it without Mystery to the Ignorant; and to encourage and invite all, that are capable, to examine and judge of it by their own Reason. Nothing can be more for the Advantage of Christianity: nothing can be more for their own Ease, Honour, and Interest: for they will always (and deservedly) be respectable, when they serve the Ends of their Profession; and always contemptible, when they would make their Profession serve other Ends.

Reconcile Scripture to Reason : that is the true Way to support its Credit and Authority. It is not sufficient to say it is the Word of GOD : that does not prove it. Or to say, that the Books, in which it is contained, are canonical ; for whatever Numbers pronounce them so, their Opinion cannot make them the Word of GOD, or convince others, that they are so. It is not sufficient to say, they were found in such a Place, or with such a Nation, or were delivered by Persons inspired. What Place, Nation, or Person can claim such a peculiar Privilege ? If they do, the Truth of such a Claim must be submitted to the Examination and Determination of Reason.

What Proofs are there to induce us to think the Old Testament the Word of God ?

The Historical Part of it, if false, proves it to be not the Word of GOD ; and, if true, does not prove it to be so ; for a  
true

true History may be delivered without Divine Inspiration. It is a History, that gives an Account of Transactions long before any other Histories; and therefore can neither be confuted nor confirmed by them. Its Authority must rest on the Credibility of the Facts related, the Credit of the Relators, the Completion of their Prophecies, or the Excellence of their Instruction.

The Facts related are of great Importance to Mankind. The short Abstract of the History before the Deluge contains a general Account of what is most interesting in that Period. An Account of the Creation of the first Man and Woman: a Fact which must have necessarily existed at some Time and Place. And why may we not believe them to have been the Persons whom MOSES describes; when to confirm it, he brings down their Genealogy to NOAH? The allegorical Account of the Manner of their Formation,

tion, of their happy Situation, of their yielding to the Temptation of Vice, of their Misery after it, of GOD's sweeping one wicked Race of their Descendants from the Face of our Globe, and replenishing it from a righteous Family, are Events very rational, and therefore very credible: especially if we consider MOSES (the Author) as a Person very worthy of Credit, and who, by Tradition, might have very good Information.

From the Deluge his History chiefly concerns the Jews: a People not considerable in Power as a Nation; but extremely so, as the only People who professed the Worship of the true GOD, when all others were sunk in Idolatry. Therefore, if any where upon Earth we are to expect a true Account of the Original of the present Race of Mankind, or of GOD's past or future Dispensations concerning them, we may reasonably expect it there or no where. We find it there,

there, and no where else. And it is come down to us authenticated in the best Manner any History can be. The Law of MOSES has always been observed by the Jews, who have always acknowledged MOSES to be the Author of it. What Reason is there then to doubt it? It was always preserved in their Memory and Tradition, as well as in Writing: and when, through the Impiety of some of their Kings, it was neglected, a Copy was retrieved by JOSIAH. They were found acting under it before the Destruction of the Assyrian Empire, during the whole Persian and Grecian Empires, and under the Roman Government till the Destruction of Jerusalem: and tho' since dispersed over the whole Earth, they adhere to it to this Day; every where bearing Testimony to the Truth of the History, stronger than any other History ever received. And if we believe the History

<sup>b</sup> PRIDEAUX's Connection, Vol. I. p. 260.

as far as MOSES carries it, we have no Reason to disbelieve the Thread of it afterwards, every Part of which stands as particularly recorded, and in a more correct Manner than that of most other Nations.

The only Objection to the Credit of any Part of it is, the Relation we meet with of some Miracles, which could gain Credit in no other Book. Now, the Question with me is not whether the thing is possible or no ; for all Things are possible with GOD ; and the Author of the material World can alter the common or natural Course of things in it as he pleases. The only Question is, when we have Reason to conclude and believe that he does so ? And, I think, we can only judge of that by this one Rule, viz. whether the Miracle related is to promote some great and good End of Providence : and if we cannot discover that, we have Reason to suspend our Belief ; or rather to believe, that it was told to serve some End  
of

of the Relator, who by imposing such Stories might hope to acquire Honour, Power, or Authority to himself, or to his Nation. Let every one judge by this Criterion ; and determine for himself : and if he cannot discover any great or good End in the Miracle related, he may safely doubt, whether that Part of Scripture is so authentic as the rest ; and whether it has not been corrupted.

If a Man finds a Fact related in Scripture, which he takes to be morally impossible, viz. inconsistent with GOD's Justice, Mercy, or Goodness ; he has much more Reason to doubt : for though there may be natural, there can be no moral Miracles : GOD may direct the Course or Motion of Things in the material World in different Ways, and his Almighty Power be equally exerted and demonstrated in all ; but his Justice and Goodness are immutable, and their Course can never be interrupted. And though

Man cannot always judge aright of his Proceedings ; yet he may be assured that the Judge of the whole Earth will do right.

I do not think that the History of the Old Testament acquires any new Credit, as to past Facts related in it, by being referred to in the New : for when our Saviour or his Apostles refer to any Part of it, such Reference cannot alter the past Facts : they refer to it as a known Record only, whether the Story recorded be true or false, Fiction or Reality : as I am as well understood, when I mention the Engagement of the Frogs and Mice, Pigmies and Cranes, as when I mention the Battles of Blenheim or Pharsalia. To give one Instance among many : when St. JAMES says, “ You have heard of ‘ JOB’s Patience ;’ ” he does not assert, that there was or was not such a Person as JOB ; but refers to the Character of a righteous and patient Man, finely described

scribed in the Old Testament, and generally known ; and which was equally instructive whether it was real or fictitious.

There is another Part of the History of the Old Testament, which is very peculiar to the Scriptures ; and that is Prophecy, or the History of Events before they happen. If these fall out in distant Periods of Time, as foretold ; such Prophecy (or anticipated History) needs no other Proof of its Truth ; or indeed of its divine Original : for GOD alone could foresee any Series of Events at such a Distance of Time. And when such Events foretold in the Old Testament are referred to by the New, or applied to it, if they are justly referred to and applied, both these Books receive the greatest reciprocal Illustration and Credit.

But to dwell no longer on the Historical Parts of Scripture ; let us consider the whole (both Old and New Testament)

as

as a religious and moral Lesson to Mankind. Where is there, or ever was there, a Book comparable to it? If we can scarce forbear thinking VIRGIL, HORACE, CICERO, and other Heathen Writers inspired, who, notwithstanding the idolatrous Fictions of their vulgar Theology, have delivered such sublime Sentiments and Precepts; what shall we say to a Book, the only one of all Antiquity, which throughout the whole Tenor of it points out to Man one only GOD, an eternal and infinite SPIRIT, the Creator of the Universe, Omnipresent, Omniscient, Omnipotent, Wise, Just, Merciful and Good; who placed Man on this Globe, to contemplate him and his Works, to adore him, and to endeavour to imitate his Perfections; promising Rewards in a future State to those that do so: and to aid him in his Duty sent CHRIST, the only faultless Person who ever appeared amongst Men, to teach them a Lesson of

Love,

Love, Charity, and universal Benevolence, of Submission, Resignation, Humility, and Temperance, more perfect than ever was before delivered ; set forth and exalted by Sentiments more noble, and Expressions more sublime, than can be met with in any other Writings. Have we not therefore Reason to call it the Word of GOD ? that is, that the Sentiments and Precepts contained in it, were suggested by GOD to the Minds of those who published them to the World. Take it altogether, it is Divine ! And if Cavils and Objections have been raised to particular Parts, they perhaps are not genuine, or not understood.

But we are not immediately to conclude, that the Scriptures are not genuine, if we do not understand them. There are many Obstacles in our Way to the right understanding of many Passages, never to be surmounted. No Writings are exempt from Errata ; which in

in ancient ones are difficult to discover and correct: and in Scripture, what wise Man will attempt to correct them? No Translations come up to the Spirit of the Original; and in many Parts cannot be adapted to the precise Sense of it: and how few can read the Scriptures in the Original, compared to the Generality of Mankind, who must trust to Translations? Difference of Style, Phrase, and Idiom, of Laws, Manners, and Customs, in Countries and Ages distant from our own, necessarily introduce great Obscurity; and are the Cause why many Parts of Scripture are not now understood, which might be clear at the Time and Place they were writ. A modern Reader, who is rational and impartial, will make great Allowances on these Accounts: and it is to be hoped, he will make a small Allowance for the Weakness of his own Understanding, the common Lot of Mortality! If after due Reflection, he is not satisfied

satisfied with his own Interpretation, he is to expect but little Aid from former Interpreters. The many Doubts remaining on several Parts of Scripture, are a Proof of the ill Success of their Labours to settle the Opinions of the World. And some Reasons may be assigned why many of them have succeeded no better. Ancient Divines have often failed from an Ignorance in natural Philosophy, many Parts of which the Moderns are better acquainted with from Observation and Experience. Modern Divines have often failed from adopting the Errors of the Ancient. Modern Philosophers often fail from a Conceit of their own Knowledge ; being too apt to conclude things to be impossible, that fall not within the narrow Compass of their Observation and Experiments ; when, on more mature Reflection they would appear most agreeable to Reason and Nature. Some fail from adhering too much to the Let  
te:

ter, turning Figure, Metaphor, Allegory, and Expressions adapted to the Ideas of the Vulgar, into Realities. Whilst others fail, by turning plain things into Mysteries, to raise the Reputation of their own Knowledge with the Vulgar, and to keep them in Awe: persuading them there is Danger in departing from their Interpretation, or even in doubting of, or examining into their Opinions: deterring some from any Examination at all, and prejudicing those who do examine against the Scriptures, by making them unintelligible by their own Interpretation; which they endeavour to force on others, in order to preserve, as they think, an Uniformity of Opinion. Mistaken Men! who take this Truth for a Paradox. ATTEMPTING A UNIFORMITY IN OPINION BREEDS DISSENTION: PERMITTING A LATITUDE IN OPINION BEGETS UNITY. Men will either not think of Religion at all, or they will

will think for themselves. They can do no otherwise ; for their particular Ideas arise from the Impression of Objects on their Minds ; which are seen by different Men in different Lights, and under different Circumstances : and it was as much the Intention of Providence, that there should be a Difference of Opinions as of Persons : nor is it to be imagined, that God, who so formed Man, is offended with such Difference of Opinion on any Subject.

It is a vain Attempt to think of making Men agree in any one Religion, by forbidding them to examine into the Principles of it. Nay, it makes it impossible for them to be of that Religion ; notwithstanding they profess it ; or however they may comply with outward Forms, from Fashion, from Deference to Authority, or from Fear of Punishment ; for Religion must arise from an inward Conviction, and there can be no Conviction without

without Examination, and weighing the Reasons for and against it.

It is as vain to think of forcing Men into a Religion by attacking their Persons or Reputation : Persecution may make good Men Martyrs, and bad ones Hypocrites ; but can never make a Man religious ; for neither Blows nor Calumny are proper Arguments of Conviction.

It is as vain too to think of preserving such a Uniformity by Mens setting up their own Decisions for a Guide ; calling themselves orthodox, and the rest of the World Heretics ; making it meritorious in a Man to follow their Opinions blindfold, and criminal in him, after his best Examination, to follow his own. If private Men differ with public Decisions, what Wonder ? when these Decisions have often differed with one another : Popes have condemned Popes, and Councils Councils ; travelling the World over to settle Points, some inexplicable, and others frivolous ;

frivolous ; and taking great Pains to make themselves ridiculous. Which must always be the Case, when Man's Judgment, mixed with his Interests, Passions, and Infirmities, is set up as a Standard of Faith instead of the Scripture.

It was commendable in the Bereans to examine the Scriptures ; which require, that every one should be ready to give a Reason for the Hope that is in him. And it is vain to think of establishing the Authority of Scripture, without leaving Men at liberty to examine and consider the external and internal Evidence of the Truth of it. A Man cannot believe it to be true without some Reason for his Belief : and it is not a good Reason, because another either does, or says he believes it. Nor can he believe any Part of it, that he thinks repugnant to Reason, which is the only Rule by which he can judge of it : and he is sure that whatever is repugnant to right Reason, could not

be delivered by Men commissioned and inspired by GOD.

It is vain to endeavour to stop a free Enquiry into the Grounds of Religion ; it makes Men more eager after such Enquiries. It is very imprudent ; it hurts both Religion and the Clergy ; for Men are apt to suspect a Cause that is not suffered to come to a Trial, as well as the Advocates for it. If it is true, why are they against bringing it to the Test ? If it is false, why would they impose it ? If it is doubtful, why are they angry with those that doubt it ? Truth will bear the Light ; and the more it is exposed to it, the brighter it will appear. It is certain, that nothing hath done more Prejudice to Christianity, than the trying to deter Men from such Enquiries ; by branding them with opprobrious Names, by inflaming others against them, and by alarming them with the Danger of listening to Reason ; as if it was a Crime to employ

employ that noblest Talent, with which God hath intrusted them, and on the most important of all Subjects.

Christianity is a good Cause, and will bear any Examination: to prevent an Examination is to betray, and not to defend it. Leave the Gospel with every Man to examine: the Excellence of its Doctrine will defend it. It is to be trusted with the Laity as well as Clergy; for it makes no Distinction between them. Every one may understand the most necessary Parts of it; they want neither Popes nor Councils to explain them. It requires no Artifice to support it: no false Miracles: no ancient Opinion, or Practice, either of Fathers or Saints, whether they were learned, able, or honest, or whether they were weak, credulous, or designing Men. Nor can any human Authority, though dignified with the Name of primitive, add the least Weight to it. We ought not to trust to Authority, but appeal to

Reason for the Defence of Christianity ; and begin by convincing Men, instead of scattering Terrors, which no wise Man will regard. It was monstrous to believe, or to endeavour to persuade others, that any one would be damned for a Mistake in Judgment or Opinion. What an unworthy Notion must he have of the Deity who holds such a Tenet ! Instead of condemning his Neighbour for no Crime, he should ask Pardon of GOD for his own Impiety.

I have now delivered my sincere Sentiments on the Subject of Christianity ; and with unusual Freedom. And I thank GOD, that I live in an Age and Country in which that Freedom is not restrained. No Religion can stand, that hath not Reason and Nature for its Foundation : nor can there be any Certainty, that it is so founded, without a free Examination, and a free Declaration of every Man's Opinion, and of the Reasons on which  
he

he grounds it: for such Discussions are the only ready way to the Truth. Concealment, Stratagem, Force, or Authority, can never support any Religion. Christianity needs no such Defence. It is much better defended by shewing it is agreeable to Reason and Philosophy, which was my Design in writing this Treatise.

Before I conclude, I would willingly obviate any Misconstruction of what I have said relating to the false Pretensions and Usurpations of the Clergy: that I may not be thought to point Reflections where I never intended them. I refer all I have said on that Topic to past Times, and not to the present; to Times of Ignorance and Superstition, and not to an Age so enlightened as this. I sincerely honour the present Clergy of this Island. They are a Body of Men highly respectable: many of them very eminent in Learning; very few scandalous in Life.

I think, that they are extremely different from such of their Predecessors, as I have described : that sensible of their Errors they will avoid them : and that having more enlarged Notions, as well as more Candor and Charity, they will be the great Instruments of GOD, to set Revelation in a fair and clear Light, and to recommend Christianity to the Understanding and Affection, to the Head and Heart of Mankind. There is no thinking Person, who can doubt of the Existence of a Deity ? *That there is such a Power above us, all Nature cries aloud through all her Works*, says <sup>i</sup> the most ingenious and best of our moral Writers. And no Man can believe otherwise, without believing this Absurdity, that there are Effects without a Cause. Therefore the Atheist (real or pretended) is the most ignorant, low, and contemptible Ideot. Any Attack of his upon Religion must always be very weak :

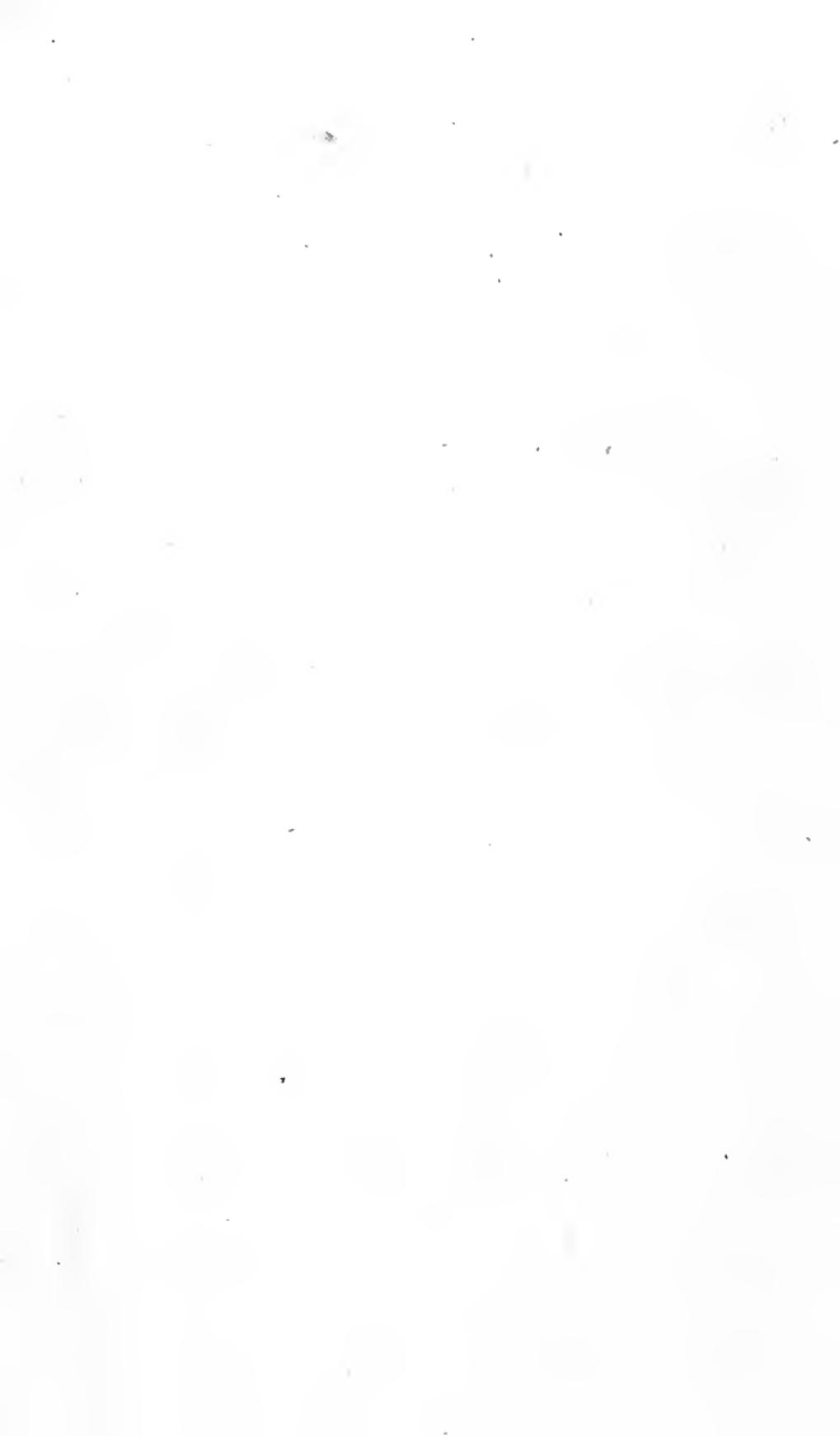
<sup>i</sup> ADDISON.

to be pitied only, never to be dreaded. There are a much greater number of Men, who believe the Being of a God, but who doubt of the Truth of Revelation: distinguished of late by the name of Deists. These Men (if sincerely religious) would soon be Converts to Christianity, could they see it in its genuine Principles, stripped of the worldly Disguise in which it has been dressed since its first Connection with the State: and would admire the Lustre of the Gem, were it cleansed from the Stains and Spots, which have so long sullied and disgraced it. This ought to be the Study and Labour of the Clergy: they ought to disabuse Mankind; and to extricate them out of that Labyrinth of Errors, into which they have been led by the Blindness or Wickedness of their former Guides. And it is with sincere Pleasure I observe them now fairly debating all Points with those who publish  
their

their Opinions to the World: appealing to Reason and Scripture, not to Authority and Tradition: defending their Cause with their own Abilities, not calling in the Aid of the State: trusting to Argument and Conviction, not to Force and Persecution. While they proceed in a Manner so dispassionate, and treat others with Candor and Temper, they will ever gain Profelytes and Friends. If they give up the weak Outworks of ancient Error, and retire to the Citadel of the Gospel, (strong by Nature without Art) they will render Christianity impregnable.  
**LIKE WISE MEN, THEY WILL BUILD GOD'S HOUSE, THE CHURCH, NOT UPON THE SAND, BUT UPON A ROCK. THEN LET THE RAIN DESCEND, THE FLOODS COME, AND THE WINDS BLOW, AND BEAT UPON THAT HOUSE, IT WILL NOT FALL, FOR IT IS FOUNDED ON A ROCK; AND THE GATES OF HELL SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT.**

F I N I S.







**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY**  
**Los Angeles**

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

RECD 15.7.54

JUN 1954

BL May -  
51 Religio phil-  
H32r osophi

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



AA 000 088 182 1

BL  
51  
H32r

